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JOHN WESLEY EVANGELIST



RICHARD GREEN



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JOHN WESLEY



John Westley

Ætat. c. 38.

after the painting by Williams from the original in Didsbury College.

JOHN WESLEY

EVANGELIST

BY THE

REV. RICHARD GREEN

Author of

‘The Life of John Wesley,’ ‘The Mission of Methodism’ (The Fernley Lecture
for 1890), ‘The Works of John and Charles Wesley : a Bibliography’



LONDON

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

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later and expanded work ; and to Tyerman, whose original researches into the history of the principal agents of the early Methodist revival constitute a treasury from which every subsequent writer has been glad to borrow.

But more especially am I indebted to Wesley's autobiography presented in his printed *Journals* ;¹ to his letters, of which I have copies of more than sixteen hundred ; to his numerous works, of which I have the advantage of possessing a complete collection—perhaps the only one ever made ; and also to so much of Charles Wesley's *Journal* as we possess.

I must also acknowledge my deep obligation for many useful suggestions, to my two valued friends, the Rev. Thos. F. Lockyer, B.A., and the Rev. Henry J. Foster. The latter has kindly added to his other help by reading the proofs for me. I owe a debt of gratitude also to Francis M. Jackson, Esq., of Bowdon, for the admirable Index which he has prepared.

RICHARD GREEN.

EDGBASTON,

1905.

¹ The *Journals* were issued by Wesley at intervals, in twenty-one duodecimo volumes. The preparation of a corrected and annotated edition of these *Journals* is now in process.

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PART I
THE PREPARATION

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY—BIRTH—HOME-LIFE

THE name Wesley is inseparably linked for all future time with that of the little town of Epworth, in the isle of Axholme, North Lincolnshire.¹ For the present, however, it is needful to pass from the north-east of England to the south-west. The researches into the family history, made by order of the first Earl of Mornington, disclose the fact that the Wesley (Westley, Wellesley) family had their original seat at Wilswe, or Welswe, near Wells, Somerset. The genealogy has been traced as far back as to Guy, who was made a Thane by Athelstan, *circ.* A.D. 938. Guy's great-grandson was Walrond of Welswey, and the grandson of this latter, Roger de Wellesley.²

¹ Axholme, or Axelholme ; in Saxon, Eaxelholme.

² It has been suggested that these variations conform strictly to the etymological probabilities of the case. Wilswe, or Welswe, meant *the way of the well*—Wils or Wels being the contracted genitive—and *we* (for *weg*) the noun thus qualified. It may then be inferred that the home was *on the way to some well-known spring*—perhaps one of the springs from which Wells takes its name. In the sixth generation the name changes to the familiar Wellesley (*well* = *welle*, and *leye* = *land*—our *lea*, as meaning meadow). Thus we have no longer *the way of the well*, but *the land of the well*, and we may infer, either a removal

One branch of the family is traced to Sir Richard de Wellesley, who became the head of the Wesleys of Dangan, co. Meath, Ireland, from which branch the Marquis of Wellesley, Governor-General of India, and his brother Arthur, Duke of Wellington, descended. Sir Richard's eldest brother, Walrond de Wellesley, second Baron Norragh, became the head of another branch. He succeeded to the family estate, Wellesley Manor, co. Somerset. His son Gerald, the third Baron, having offended King Henry IV., was deprived of his title. Gerald's son and heir, Arthur, took the name of Westley; but his son Hugh, who was knighted, resumed the name Wellesley. Sir Hugh's grandson, Walter, took again the name Wesley or Westley. Walter's son, Sir Herbert Wesley, or Westley, of Westleigh, co. Devon, married Elizabeth, daughter of Robert de Wellesley of Dangan Castle, Ireland, so that in their son Bartholomew, born 1596, these two branches of the family were united, his father representing the original stock, and his mother the Wellesley branch of that stock, of which she was a descendant. Hence proceeds the Epworth branch of the family. Bartholomew married a daughter of Sir Henry Colley, of Carbery Castle; and their son, John Westley,¹ who married the daughter of the

to the estate on which the famous spring was situated, or that the family domain now included the actual locality of the well.

The Irish branch of the family, after alternating the two family names (both now more strictly surnames), eventually adopted 'Wellesley,' while the other, and senior branch, from which the Epworth family were descended, adopted Wesley—variously spelt Westley, Wesley, and Wesley. The elder line of the descent have become Wellesley-Wesley. —See *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. i. p. 67.

¹ Many interesting particulars respecting Bartholomew, and his son, John Westley, are collected in *The Fathers of the Wesley Family*, by

celebrated Puritan, John White, known as the Patriarch of Dorchester, was the father of Samuel of Epworth, the father of Wesley.

The mother of Wesley was Susanna, daughter of the Rev. Samuel Annesley, second son of Francis Annesley, Viscount Valentia, the eldest son being Arthur, Earl of Anglesea. The mother of Susanna was daughter of another John White, a distinguished Puritan lawyer in London.

Of Bartholomew Westley's early life but little is known. No family record has been preserved to inform us where he was born, or how his early days were spent. But we learn that he was sent while young to one of the universities, that he was diligent in his studies, which included physic and divinity ; and that as a clergyman he was distinguished for plainness of speech, so that he was not a popular preacher to those that looked more for garnished words than for important truths.¹ He lived for some time at Bridport, and certainly preached at Allington, a suburb of that town ;² after which he held the livings of Charmouth and Catherston, villages in the south-west of Dorset, from which he was ejected, even before the passing of the Act of Uniformity, in 1662. It is thought that he then became an itinerant preacher at Bridport, Lyme, Charmouth, Netherbury, Beaminster, etc. He also practised medicine, for which he was

William Beal. 2nd ed. London, 1862 ; *Memoirs of the Wesley Family*. By Adam Clarke. 2nd ed. Two vols. London. Tegg ; and the subsequent researches of G. J. Stevenson, in *Memorials of the Wesley Family*. London. Partridge, 1876.

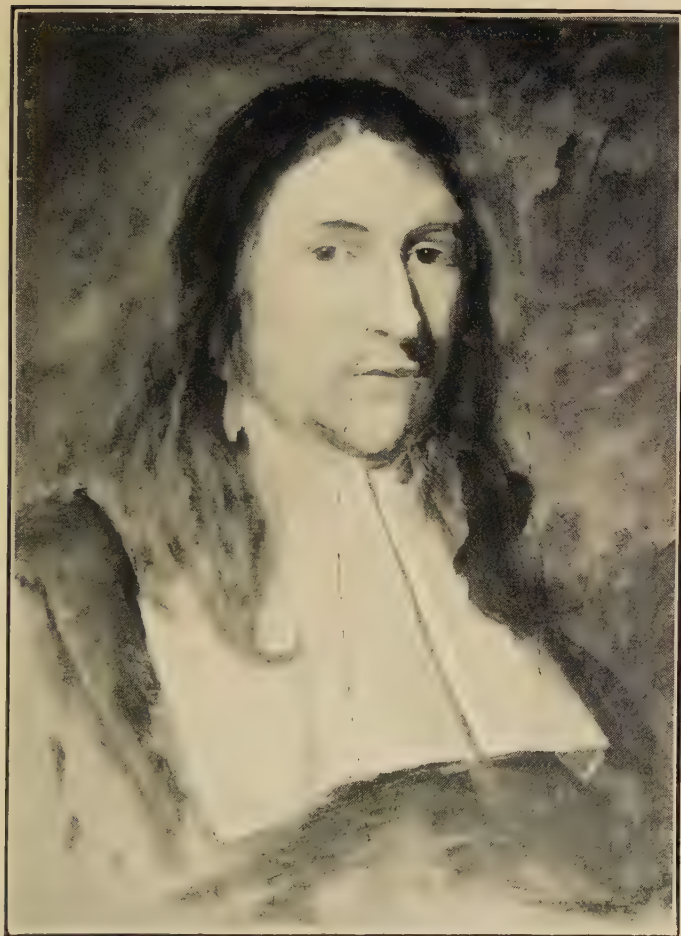
¹ Calamy.

² The pulpit which he used there is still preserved in the Wesleyan school-room at Bridport.

fitted by his university training. He resided for some time at Charmouth, until the Five Mile Act drove him away. His last years were spent in seclusion, probably at Lyme, where he made over his fields to his son John, then Vicar of Winterbourne-Whitchurch. He died about the age of eighty-five ; but the exact time and place of his burial were, until recently, unknown. We now learn that his death (which was probably hastened by the premature death of his son, John Westley) took place at Lyme Regis, in the year 1670, and that he was buried there on February 15 of that year, 'in the beautiful sea-girt churchyard—almost within sight of the "Whitechapel Rocks," and of the secluded dell where he and his persecuted parishioners were wont to meet during the troublous times that followed the Restoration.'¹

John, the son of Bartholomew Westley, was born, perhaps at Bridport, about the year 1636. His early education was probably gained at Dorchester Grammar School ; afterwards he entered New Hall, Oxford, where he made considerable progress in Oriental languages. He took his Master's degree, and, on account of his seriousness, industry, and progress, gained the special attention of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. John Owen, Cromwell's chaplain. On leaving Oxford, he joined an 'associated' church, and was appointed an evangelist or missionary, and preached at Melcombe, Radipole, and other places in Dorset. He was never episcopally ordained. In 1658, he became Vicar of Winterbourne-Whitchurch, having been approved by Cromwell's 'triers,' and appointed to the living by the trustees. Soon

¹ Broadley, *John Wesley and his Dorset Forbears*.



JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

(1636—1670.)

Grandfather of the Revs. John and Charles Wesley.

afterwards he married a niece of Thomas Fuller, daughter of John White, who was a notable figure in the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Westley laid aside the Liturgy, and introduced the Presbyterian or Independent form of worship. A prolonged conversation which he had with the Bishop of Bristol is recorded in the *Nonconformists' Memorial*, and throws much light upon the position, character, and views of Westley. His preaching was the means of the conversion of sinners, wherever he exercised his ministry.

These were bitter times for the nonconforming clergy; matters were ripening for the black Bartholomew Day of 1662. Spies and informers were abroad, and John Westley (or Wesly, as he sometimes signed his name) fell a victim. Frivolous articles were drawn up against him, and he was imprisoned for more than five months. Early in 1662 he was seized when coming out of church, was again cast into prison, and after a time once more set free. This was within a month of August 24, when he and two thousand more were ejected from their churches and their homes. Soon afterwards his son Samuel was born. Early in the following year he removed to Melcombe; but he was presently driven from the town, and a fine of £20 was imposed on his landlady, and five shillings a week upon himself. As a homeless fugitive he visited Ilminster, Bridgewater, and Taunton, where he preached almost every day, being treated with great kindness by the Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists. For some weeks he was the enthusiastic fellow-labourer of Joseph Alleine. By the generosity

of an unknown friend, a home was provided for himself and family at Preston, to which he removed in 1663. Here several of his children were born. He ministered, as he had opportunity, at Weymouth and places in the vicinity, though after 1664 he was prevented from preaching by the passing of the Conventicle Act. But he could not be wholly silenced, and began to preach in private at Preston and elsewhere. He afterwards became pastor to a small company of people at Poole, with whom he continued until his death, though he was several times apprehended, and four times imprisoned. At one time he was obliged to leave his wife and family and flock, and for a considerable period remained hidden. At length his sufferings and privations, the decay of spiritual religion, the loss of friends, together with the increasing virulence of the enemies of religion, overpowered him, and he died at the early age of thirty-three or thirty-four, about the year 1670.

Samuel Wesley was born at Winterbourne-Whitchurch, in December, 1662.¹ He received his education at the Dorchester Free School, where he remained until he was fifteen years of age. His widowed mother being at this time very poor, he was sent, through the kindness of Dissenting friends, to an academy at Stepney, in the hope that he would enter the Dissenting Ministry. Here he remained two years, by which time, he says, he was a dabbler in rhyme and faction, and, encouraged by some of the Dissenting ministers, wrote 'silly lampoons on

¹ The following entry is taken from the old parish register :—

" 1662—Samuel Wesly, the son of John Wesly, was baptized December.17 "

Church and State.' He advanced in classical learning, and had the advantage of attending the ministry of Charnock, and other popular ministers of the day; he once heard 'friend Bunyan.'

Being engaged to reply to some severe strictures written against the Dissenters, he entered upon a course of reading which led to a change in his views, and, in consequence, to his attaching himself to the Established Church. Encouraged by the offer of an exhibition of £10, he determined to go to Oxford. Accordingly he set out early one morning, 'footing' it all the way. He entered himself as a servitor of Exeter College, supported himself for five years, took his degree, and removed to London, where he was ordained deacon, August 7, 1688. He obtained a curacy, with an income of £28, and afterwards a chaplaincy on board a man-of-war, where he began his poem on *The Life of Christ*.

He then obtained another curacy, and soon after married, as was said above, Susanna, daughter of Dr. Annesley, a leading Nonconformist divine, at whose house he with other earnest students had frequently found a welcome.

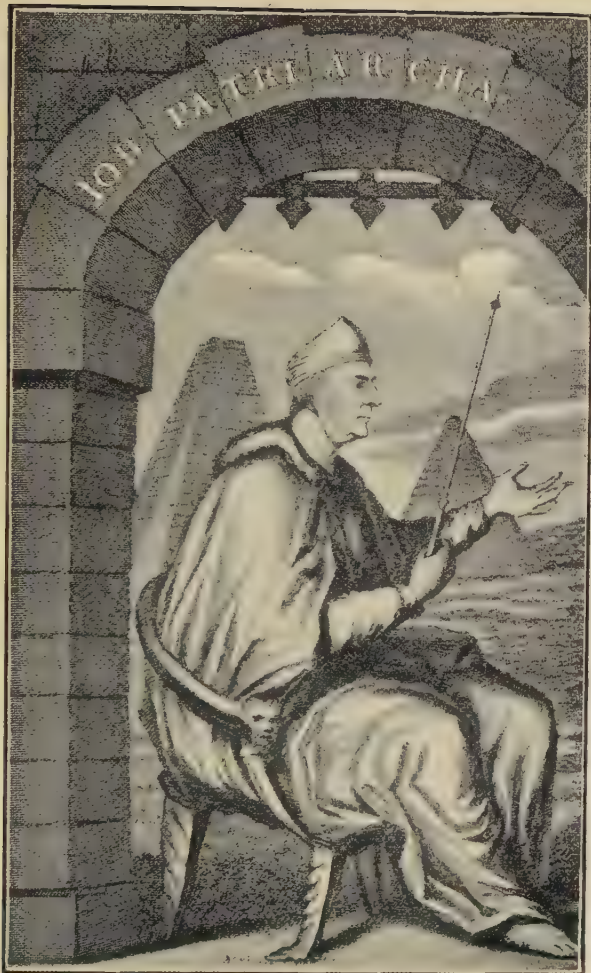
In 1691, he was appointed to the parish of South Ormesby, with an income of £50 and a house—'a mean cot composed of reeds and clay.' Here he spent nearly six of the best years of his life, and wrote some of his most able works, and here five of his children were born. About the year 1696 or 1697 he removed with his wife and family to Epworth, where the special interest of the family history commences.

Samuel Wesley was strict in the observance of

his duties as parish priest; well-read, scholarly, devoted to his book and his pen, a passionate student of the Scriptures in their original tongues, a voluminous writer both in prose and verse, an active, bustling man, brimming over with wit and genius, a vivacious and inordinate worker, knowing little of rest and nothing of self-indulgence—qualities which were afterwards highly developed in his son. His talents and erudition soon brought him into notoriety, and he busied himself with Church matters, and by compulsion gave heed to business affairs, for which he was not specially fitted, this leading at times to not a little interruption of the family comfort. He usually attended the sittings of Convocation, holding such attendance to be part of his duty. This he performed at an expense of money which he could ill spare from the necessities of so large a family, and at a cost of time which was injurious to his parish. But he was a man of unimpeachable integrity, of lofty moral sensibility, and very firm in his attachment to principle. His struggles with poverty, and his difficulties amongst his boorish parishioners, together with many interesting facts in the family history, are told at some length in Tyerman's *Life and Times of Samuel Wesley*.

Of the ancestors of Susanna Wesley, her biographer says,¹ some of them, as we have seen, could boast patrician blood, and occasionally filled important stations in the Commonwealth, while others rejoiced in a higher, a spiritual nobility. Her father was 'Samuell, the sonne of John Anslye,' probably of the parish of

¹ *The Mother of the Wesleys*. By the Rev. John Kirk. 5th ed. London, Jarrold, 1868.



REV. SAMUEL WESLEY, RECTOR OF EPWORTH.

John Wesley's Father.

*Reduced facsimile of the copperplate frontispiece of his Latin Commentary
on Job, published in 1736.*

Haseley, in Warwickshire, in the church of which parish young Annesley was baptized in March, 1620. He was serious from his earliest days, a diligent reader of Holy Scripture, and, during his college course at Oxford, remarkable for his temperance and industry. On his entering upon his first living in the parish of Cliffe, in Kent, his parishioners, fonder of rioting and drunkenness than of sobriety and religion, hailed him with 'spits, forks, and stones,' and many times threatened his life. 'Use me as you will,' said the courageous young parson, 'I am resolved to continue with you until God has fitted you by my ministry to entertain a better. Then, when you are so prepared, I will leave you.' When he did leave them, it was amid their tears and cries, and a thousand other tokens of heart-felt love. He afterwards became Vicar of Cripplegate, where he remained until he shared the fate of his fellow Nonconformists in 1662. For the next ten years he appears to have lived in obscurity, 'his Nonconformity creating for him many outward troubles, but no inward uneasiness.' Taking advantage of the Declaration of Indulgence, in 1672 he licensed a meeting-house in Little St. Helen's, Bishopsgate Street, where he gathered a large and flourishing church, to which he lovingly ministered for twenty-five years. He was blessed with a hardy constitution. 'The days of "hoare frost" and chilling winds found him in his study at the top of the house with open windows and empty fire-grate.' He was temperate in all things, used no stimulants, and he could endure any amount of active exercise and toil, preaching twice or thrice every day of the week without any sense of weariness.

He died December 16, 1696, and was buried at St. Leonard's, Shoreditch. At his funeral sermon it was said that 'in him the Church had lost a pillar, the nation a wrestler with God, the poor a benefactor, his people a faithful pastor, his children a tender father, and the Ministry an exemplary fellow-labourer.'

During his residence in Cliffe he had married the daughter of John White, 'a grave lawyer,' a Puritan from his youth, very decided in his religious principles and active in the ecclesiastical controversies of the time. He was a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Mrs. Annesley is spoken of as a woman of superior understanding, and of earnest and consistent piety. She spared no pains in endeavouring to promote the religious welfare of her numerous children. Susanna was the youngest daughter among 'two dozen, or a quarter of a hundred,' children born to this honoured pair. Mr. Kirk opines that those grand qualities of character so much admired in Susanna Wesley were inherited from her mother, and that the godly ordering of the family in Epworth rectory was an imitation of that which prevailed in the house of the Nonconformist minister, under the care of Susanna Wesley's own mother.

If there be any virtue in an ancestry which combines learning, respectability, and godliness on both sides, John Wesley may certainly claim a true nobleness of descent. He came of people having a mental and spiritual history. It is impossible to mark these particulars in the family record, without being impressed with the singular providence that brought together through successive generations the many elements of character that were needful to one

who should be a suitable agent of Divine grace in so great a work as that to which Wesley was called. His was no ordinary ancestry; he was no ordinary man. He inherited the stern tenacity and the devotional temper of the Puritan. The hard training which developed in him great powers of endurance, the spiritual discipline which led him to so profound a reverence for sacred things, the teaching of poverty which gave to him the sense of independence of wealth, and of superiority to its claims, were not unknown to many of his forbears. Moreover, the persecution and suffering for great principles which many of them endured, and which embedded those principles so firmly in their minds, he shared. In the mental culture that gave both quickness in acquiring knowledge and the power to retain it; in the development of the poetic and musical faculties, which in this family attained to so high a degree of perfection; and in the facility of public speaking which successive individuals displayed, and which culminated in the extraordinary powers of its final example—in all these we mark a collocation of distinguishing characteristics that formed the special qualifications of Wesley for his remarkable career.

What shall be said of Susanna Wesley, who takes rank with the most celebrated mothers that history recalls? We learn that she was early devoted to reading—first, the ‘good books’ which she recognized as among the mercies of her childhood, and then a fearless venture upon the troubled waters of the theological controversies of the day, when she well-nigh made shipwreck of her faith on the rock of Socinianism, from which she was rescued by the

'religious orthodox man' who afterwards became her husband. By what means she, educated among the Dissenters, was led to attach herself to the Church of England, we might have known, had not the fire which destroyed the Epworth parsonage also consumed a manuscript containing 'an account of the whole transaction, in which,' she says, 'I had included the main of the controversy between Dissenters and the Established Church, as far as it had come to my knowledge.' Her aptitude in writing is shown in her excellent letters to her children, and in the papers prepared by her for use in their instruction.¹ These were dissertations on the Creed, the Ten Commandments, obedience to the Law of God, the Being and perfections of God, and an exposition of the principles of Revealed Religion.

She was an admirable woman, of highly improved mind, and of a strong and masculine understanding; an obedient wife, an exemplary mother, a fervent Christian.² Her consummate management of her numerous household, her patient endurance of the pinch of poverty, her unflinching courage in the midst of trouble and danger, her deep concern for the spiritual welfare of her fellow-parishioners, her devotion to her able but somewhat erratic husband, 'her orderliness, reasonableness, steadfastness of purpose, calm authority, and tender affection,'³ find ample illustration in the numerous references to her

¹ See Stevenson's *Memorials of the Wesley Family; The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. i.; and Clarke's *Wesley Family*, vol. ii., in which appears her own account of her method of training her children and regulating her household, contained in a letter to her son John, dated July 24, 1732.

² Southey.

³ Rigg.



SUSANNA WESLEY.

John Wesley's Mother.

which are to be found in the various Wesley memoirs, more particularly in the *Life* by the Rev. John Kirk. But it is her wonderful skill in the training of her children, especially in its bearing upon the future of her illustrious son, that claims attention here.

The children in that parsonage home were the subjects of a mild, a tender, and a loving, if inflexible, rule. Mrs. Wesley took tireless pains with her numerous offspring.

We must banish all notions of harshness, haste, or irritability of temper in this gracious woman. Calmly, gently, firmly, and lovingly she moulded the plastic spirit of each child. Watching the first buddings of intelligent activity, she was beforehand with her gentle guidance, not waiting for a habit to be formed and then with severity correcting it. The rule, if inflexible, was not harshly imposed. Her biographer says, ‘All her commands were pleasant as *apples of gold in baskets of silver*.’ The guide and teacher of those little children and growing youths was their best, most loving, and most beloved friend—a wise, sweet, and saintly woman. They were not left to the care of ignorant or peevish servants, or uninterested teachers. She, with her husband’s aid, was their teacher, until, under her eye, the elder were able to give instruction to the younger. Her household was ruled by law, and she was the law-giver; but law in her tongue was the law of kindness. The schooling and training of her children were the outcome of her own training: their discipline followed her own self-discipline. In the light of modern customs the time for recreation may seem to have been short, when we remember the rule by which

she regulated her own amusements in early life—never to spend more time in any matter of recreation in one day than she spent in private religious duties. Not so bad a regulation as at first sight it appears to be, for she set apart at least one hour in the morning and one in the evening for such duties. ‘The nursery, the yard, and the adjoining croft, however, occasionally became scenes of high glee and frolic.’¹

It was into this family, on the seventeenth day of the sunny month of June, 1703, that the eleventh child, and fourth son, of the nineteen children of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, was born at Epworth parsonage; and a few hours after his birth, being weakly, he was baptized by his father. The babe was named John Benjamin, after two of the children deceased, who respectively bore these names.² The latter name was never used either by Wesley himself or by the family. Little ‘Jacky’ went through the training common to all the children of that home. His sleep in infancy was measured—three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon, gradually shortened until he needed none in the daytime. By the close of his first year he had been taught ‘to fear the rod,’ whether of punishment or of authority, and, if he cried, to do so ‘softly.’ His meals were strictly regulated as to time and quantity, and he was further taught to eat such things as were set before him, at the three daily meals, and to desire nothing between.

¹ Kirk.

² ‘I have heard him (Wesley) say, that he was christened by the name of John Benjamin; that his mother had buried two sons, one called John and the other Benjamin, and that she united their names in him. But he never made use of the second name.’—Crowther’s *Methodist Memorial*, 1810, p. 5. This accords with a family tradition.

As soon as he could speak he was taught the Lord's Prayer, which he then repeated daily, morning and evening. He was instructed to speak and act with propriety, and never to be rude in word or behaviour, even to servants. When calling a brother or sister by name, he learnt to preface the name with 'brother' or 'sister,' as the case might be. On his fifth birthday he, like all the others, save Kezzie, learnt the alphabet, and immediately began his reading lessons at the first chapter in Genesis. This birthday performance was a notable event in the life of each child, for which due preparations were made. 'No sooner was the appointed birthday with its simple festivities fairly over, than learning began in earnest. The day before the new pupil took his formal place in the schoolroom, "the house was set in order, every one's work appointed, and a charge given that no one should come into the room from nine till twelve, or from two till five." The allotted task of those hours was for the new scholar to acquire a perfect mastery of the alphabet; and in every case, save two, the evening of the day saw Mrs. Wesley's children in full possession of the elements of all future learning.'¹

Morning and evening he joined in singing the Psalms with which the school was opened and closed; and, according to the rule of the house, one of his elder sisters, probably Kezzie, who was passionately fond of the little fellow, was told off to read to him the Psalms for the day, and a chapter in the Bible.

Many have wondered how Mrs. Wesley could

¹ Kirk's *The Mother of the Wesleys*, p. 145.

succeed in inculcating all these lessons. She *taught* them. The children were not told what to do, and then whipped into the doing of it. She more than any one held the love of each child, and she gently and lovingly *led* each into the path of duty. The children learned to think with her of the importance and reasonableness of duty. We never in after years hear from any one of them a word of complaint, as against undue restriction, or of rebelliousness against the yoke borne in youth. In Wesley's most humble confessions he never names any approach to disobedience in his childhood ; nay, he looked upon his earliest years as his best. Some features of this discipline will reappear when Wesley founds his school at Kingswood.

For some years matters went on very well. 'Never were children in better order,' wrote the happy mother, rejoicing in the success of her labours ; 'never were children better disposed to piety, or in more subjection to their parents.'

But the peaceful flow of this family history was destined to be most rudely checked. The fidelity of the Rector in rebuking the sins of his people, and his activity in promoting the election of an unpopular candidate for Parliament, perhaps added to their ignoble envy of a family so greatly exalted above themselves, excited the ire of his rude parishioners, and they set fire to his parsonage. John, by a merciful providence, escaped, 'A brand plucked from the fire,' as he afterwards wrote.

Mrs. Wesley, in a letter written soon after the event, says, ' . . . When we were got into the hall, and were surrounded with flames, Mr. Wesley found



EPWORTH PARSONAGE.

he had left the keys of the doors above stairs. He ran up and recovered them a minute before the staircase took fire. When we opened the street door, the strong north-east wind drove the flames in with such violence, that none could stand against them. But some of our children got through the windows, the rest through a little door into the garden. I was not in a condition to climb up to the windows, neither could I get to the garden door. I endeavoured three times to force my passage through the street door, but was as often beat back by the fury of the flames. In this distress, I besought our blessed Saviour for help, and then waded through the fire, naked as I was, which did me no further harm than a little scorching my hands and my face. When Mr. Wesley had seen the other children safe, he heard the child in the nursery cry. He attempted to go up the stairs, but they were all on fire, and would not bear his weight. Finding it impossible to give any help, he kneeled down in the hall, and recommended the soul of the child to God.'

Wesley, at a later period, supplemented this account. He says, 'I believe it was just at that time I awaked ; for I did not cry, as they imagined, unless it was afterwards. I remember all the circumstances as distinctly as though it were but yesterday. Seeing the room was very light, I called to the maid to take me up. But none answering, I put my head out of the curtains, and saw streaks of fire on the top of the room. I got up and ran to the door, but could get no further, all the floor beyond it being in a blaze. I then climbed up on a chest which stood near the window. One in the yard saw me, and proposed

running to fetch a ladder. Another [a Mr. Rhodes,¹] answered, "There will not be time; but I have thought of another expedient. Here, I will fix myself against the wall; lift a light man and set him on my shoulders." They did so, and he took me out of the window. Just then the whole roof fell in; but it fell inward, or we had all been crushed at once. When they brought me into the house, where my father was, he cried out, "Come, neighbours, let us kneel down! Let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children; let the house go, I am rich enough." The next day, as he was walking in the garden and surveying the ruins of the house, he picked up part of a leaf of his polyglot Bible, on which just these words were legible, *Vade; vende omnia quae habes, et attolle crucem, et sequere Me.* "Go; sell all that thou hast; and take up thy cross, and follow Me."'²

In giving an account of the fire to the Rev. Mr. Hoole, Mrs. Wesley thus writes, 'Though Mr. Wesley and I and seven small children were all naked and exposed to the inclemency of the air, in a night which

¹ His grandson, a retired sea captain in Wellington, New Zealand, preserved the tradition of the name.

² *Works*, xiii. 475-6.

More recently another relic of the fire has been discovered. In the year 1832, the then Rector, wishing to alter the appearance of the garden, directed that a mound of earth standing in it should be removed. Beneath the soil was found a quantity of rubbish, and in it, at what appeared to be the foot of an old staircase, a small thick quarto Bible was discovered, bound in strong pasteboards and covered with thick leather. It was much discoloured by water and singed by fire. The man who removed the soil was allowed to take the book away. It was afterwards sold by his son to a gentleman, who presented it to Didsbury College, where it is carefully preserved with the attesting documents.



THE EPWORTH BIBLE—SHOWING WATER STAIN AND EFFECTS OF FIRE.

was as severely cold as perhaps any one can remember, and though we had before our eyes the melancholy prospect of our house and goods consuming in the flames, nor knew we whither to wander nor what to do with our little ones that now cried out, as much with the cold and because the frost cut their naked feet, as they had just before done for fear of the fire, yet so deeply were our minds affected with the goodness of God in preserving ourselves and our children's lives, that for a while we made no reflection on the condition to which we were reduced, nor did the consideration of our having no house, money, food, or raiment, for the present, much affect us.'

Forty years after this event, Wesley writes, 'We had a comfortable watch-night at the chapel. About eleven o'clock it came into my mind that this was the very day and hour in which, forty years ago, I was taken out of the flames. I stopped and gave a short account of that wonderful providence. The voice of praise and thanksgiving went up on high, and great was our rejoicing before the Lord.'¹

The dispersion of the children during the building of the new rectory unhappily left them at full liberty to converse with servants, which before they had been restrained from, and to run abroad and play with any children, good or bad. The effect was that 'that civil behaviour which made them admired, when at home, by all who saw them, was, in great measure, lost, and a clownish accent and many rude ways were learned, which were not reformed without some difficulty.' So wrote the thoughtful mother; but she set herself resolutely to the task of correcting the injury.

¹ *Journal*, February 9, 1750.

John was but six years of age, and would therefore be less liable to suffer than some of the older ones. He was received into the house of a neighbouring clergyman, with whom he remained twelve months, during the rebuilding of the parsonage, and for this family he entertained a very strong affection. His mother's care was afterwards specially directed towards him. In a solemn meditation she wrote, 'I would offer Thee myself and all that Thou hast given me; and I would resolve—O give me grace to do it!—that the residue of my life shall be all devoted to Thy service. And I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child that Thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been; that I may endeavour to instil into his mind the principles of Thy true religion and virtue. Lord, give grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success!'¹ 'No one can, without renouncing the world in the most literal sense, observe my method,' she wrote, 'and there are few, if any, that would entirely devote twenty years of the prime of life in hopes to save the souls of their children, which they think may be saved without so much ado—for that was my principal intention, however unskillfully managed.'²

In addition to the teachings of the schoolroom, each child in turn was, once a week, privately conversed with, when religious principles were more minutely instilled, and religious duties more closely pressed home. Jacky's day was Thursday, and years afterwards he wrote to his mother, 'If you can spare

¹ Moore, i. 116.

² Letter of Mrs. Wesley—See Overton, *John Wesley*, p. 5.

me only that little part of Thursday evening which you formerly bestowed upon me in another manner, I doubt not it would be as useful now for correcting my heart as it was then for forming my judgment.'

The conditions of life in that Lincolnshire rectory were highly favourable to the growth of goodness of character. Self-restraint, self-discipline, and self-denial were daily practised. Reverential regard for sacred things, with unswerving faith in the Divine word, and unwavering obedience to it, was habitually displayed. We hear little of high culture in the neighbourhood, but within those garden walls homely virtues flourished, and learning and joyfulness and love abounded. 'There would be few neighbours with whom the Wesleys could associate on terms of equality; they would therefore be left very much to their own resources. But, as all the family—father, mother, and all the brothers and sisters—were above the average in point of abilities and attainments, this would be no detriment to John Welsey's intellectual culture, while at the same time it would lay the foundation of that simplicity, guilelessness, and unworldliness which were his strongly marked characteristics all through life. His early home training also combined the double advantage of giving him the culture and refinement of a thorough gentleman, and the hardness and power to endure poverty. For, from circumstances into which it is not necessary to enter, the Wesleys were always poor, sometimes even to the verge of destitution.'¹

Amidst these favourable surroundings young

¹ Overton,

Wesley grew up. Who, then, were his daily companions? His brother Samuel left home when John was only one year old; Martha was but three years, and Charles but two, at the time of the fire. He was, therefore, thrown mainly into the company of his elder sisters. But what sisters! Emilia, at that time seventeen years of age—intellectual, studious, scholarly, beautiful in appearance, virtuous, and witty, having an exquisite taste for poetry and music, and passionately fond of John. Susanna, good-natured, facetious, and a little romantic, with a mind naturally strong and vivacious, and well-refined by a good education. Mary, somewhat deformed in body, but with a face that was exceedingly beautiful, a fair and legible index to a mind and disposition almost angelic—well-informed and naturally refined, humble, obliging, and amiable, she was the favourite and delight of the whole family.¹ Hetty, who had all the graces and gifts of her brothers and sisters, combined with great personal accomplishments and more than ordinary mental endowments. (She could read the Greek Testament when she was eight years of age.) Hetty was six years older than John; Anne ('Nancy') was seven years his senior. The latter inherited all the excellencies, social, moral, and spiritual, which characterized the family; it was her delight to sit in her mother's room, after school hours, to listen to her conversation, or her remarks on things and books. She also was passionately attached to John. This was the state of the household at the time of the fire, and John had five years more to spend in that home before he was removed to school.

¹ Clarke.

‘One pictures John Wesley at Epworth as a grave, sedate child, always wanting to know the reason of everything, one of a group of remarkable children, each of them with a strong individuality and a very high spirit, but all kept well in hand by their admirable mother; all precise and rather formal, after the fashion of the day, in their language and habits.’¹ There are but few incidents of his home-life recorded. John thought deeply upon every subject, and felt himself answerable to his reason and conscience for everything he did; in none of them did passion or natural appetite seem to have any peculiar sway. ‘Mr. Wesley has told me,’ says Dr. Adam Clarke,² ‘that when he was a child, and was asked at any time, out of the common way of meals, to have, for instance, a piece of bread and butter, fruit, etc., he has replied, with cool unconcern, “I thank you, I will think of it.”’ He would neither touch nor do anything till he had reflected on its fitness and propriety. This subjection of his mind to deep reflection, which, to those who were not acquainted with him, might have appeared like hesitation, sometimes puzzled the family. In one instance his father said in a pet to Mrs. Wesley, ‘I profess, sweetheart, I think our Jack would not attend to the most pressing necessities of nature, unless he could give a reason for it.’ ‘Child,’ said his father to him, when he was young, ‘you think to carry everything by dint of argument; but you will find how very little is ever done in the world by close reason.’ Wesley, recording this, adds, ‘Very little indeed.’ Attacked by small-pox when he was between eight and nine years of age, he bore the

¹ Overton.² *Memoirs of the Wesley Family.*

affliction with patience and fortitude. In a letter to her husband, Mrs. Wesley says, 'Jack has borne his disease bravely, like a man, and, indeed, like a Christian, without complaint.' With these few facts in view, it will hardly excite surprise that his conduct was such that his father admitted him to the Lord's table when he was only eight years of age.

Concerning himself at this time, he, some years afterwards, wrote, 'I believe till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that *washing of the Holy Ghost* which was given me in baptism'—such were his views at the time—'having been strictly educated and carefully taught that I could only be saved by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God; in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed. And those instructions, so far as they respected outward duties and sins, I gladly received, and often thought of.'¹

¹ *Journal*, May 23, 1728.



EPWORTH CHURCH.

From an old print.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LIFE

THE youthful Wesley was now to pass into circumstances widely different from all with which he had hitherto been familiar. In his eleventh year he entered the Charterhouse, London, as a foundation scholar (of whom there were about forty, and sixty 'town-boys'), on the nomination of the Duke of Buckingham, who often befriended the Wesley family. From the seclusion of his rural home to the centre of a great city, and from the companionship of sisters to the company of a hundred youths of various ages, dispositions, character, and training, was a very great change, and must have proved a shock to this delicately sensitive and susceptible spirit, however much it may have been tempered by preparatory conversation at the Rectory. In respect of character, he was prepared to stand in the presence of any of them, and probably few, if any, had undergone so severe a discipline as he—a discipline that was not a restraint from which in youthful restlessness he desired to be freed, but a habit of life which had the approval of his young conscience and judgment. All that can be learnt of him during his stay at the Charterhouse points to

diligence and good behaviour. His previous mental discipline, his rooted habits of order, regularity, and obedience, would well prepare him for the routine and restrictions of school-life. He had not now to take his first lessons in method, as would many of his compeers ; for in his youth he was an adept in these matters, as is revealed by the rigidity with which he followed his father's advice to run round the Charterhouse garden three times every morning—a distance of about a mile—for the benefit of his health. Southey says that for his quietness, regularity, and application he became a favourite with the master, Dr. Walker ; and he adds, ' Wesley seems never to have looked back with melancholy upon the days that were gone ; earthly regrets of this kind could find no room in one who was continually pressing onward to the goal.'

How much soever Wesley may have been inured to privation, he could not but suffer painfully from the practice of the older boys taking from the younger their portions of meat, so that during a great part of his residence he fared mainly on dry bread. In after days he imputed his vigorous health partly to this fact. 'From ten to fourteen,' says he, 'I had little but bread to eat, and not great plenty of that. I believe this was so far from hurting me that it laid the foundation of lasting health.'

The following story, anticipatory of the power over multitudes which Wesley in after life exercised, was related by his brother Charles to his daughter, Miss Sarah Wesley, who inserted it in a letter to Dr. Adam Clarke. 'When John Wesley was a little boy at the Charterhouse School, the master, missing

all the little boys from the playground, supposed them, by their quietness, to be in some mischief. Searching, he found them all assembled in the schoolroom around my uncle, who was amusing them with instructive tales, to which they attentively listened rather than follow their accustomed sports. The master expressed much approbation towards them and John Wesley, and he wished him to repeat this entertainment, as often as he could obtain auditors and so well employ his time.¹

As to his progress in learning, the testimony of his brother Samuel, then an usher at Westminster School, who kept careful watch over his younger brother, is conclusive. He says in a letter to his father, 'My brother Jack, I can faithfully assure you, gives you no manner of discouragement from breeding your third son (Charles) a scholar;' and again, 'Jack is with me, and a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can.'²

Reference must be made here to some very curious and unexplained phenomena which occurred at the home in Epworth during the months of December, 1716, and January, 1717. Sundry strange noises were heard and sights witnessed in different parts of the house, for which no reasonable explanation has been forthcoming—the general belief of the family inclining to the acknowledgment of them as of supernatural origin. But John was away, and our interest in them is confined solely to their influence upon his mind. It is not improbable that his inquiry into these strange events may have increased in him a persuasion of the reality of supernatural phenomena,

¹ Stevenson's *Wesley Family*, p. 483.

² Moore.

his belief in which he so often afterwards declared. 'The very fact that he was not a personal witness to the phenomena may have deepened their effect upon him. . . . The kind of effect on his mind is illustrated by that which it had on his sister Emily, who announces herself, with the *naïve* decision of eighteen, as "inclined to infidelity" at the time of these noises, and by them reclaimed to a belief in the spiritual world. . . . A series of unexplained phenomena, interesting and meaningless as they were, furnished his mind with a stock of recollections firmly rooted in the supernatural which justified his freely adding to their number any analogous instances of superhuman agency without investigation.'¹

The fullest accounts were afterwards gathered by Mr. Samuel Wesley, and subsequently published by Dr. Priestley,² who thinks it most probable that it was a trick of the servants, assisted by some of the neighbours. In reply to this, Southey says, 'It may be safely asserted that many of the circumstances cannot be explained by any such supposition, nor by any legerdemain, nor by ventriloquism, nor by any secret of acoustics. In the present instance no manifestation of Divine power is supposed more than in the appearance of a departed spirit. Such things may be preternatural and yet not miraculous; they may not be in the ordinary course of nature, and yet imply no alteration of its laws.'³ Wesley, on going down to Epworth four years later, carefully inquired

¹ Wedgwood, *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century*.

² *Original Letters by the Rev. John Wesley, etc.* By Joshua Priestley, LL.D., F.R.S. Birmingham, 1791.

³ *The Life of Wesley*.

into the particulars, speaking to each of the persons who were then in the house, and taking down what each could testify of his or her own knowledge. This account he afterwards published, but without comment.¹

After a careful analysis and comparison, both of the contemporary and the subsequent records of these remarkable phenomena, the author of *Modern Spiritualism* says, 'The Wesley case indicates pretty clearly that the main reason for the apparently inexplicable element in these narratives is the defect of the evidence. When we have only second-hand accounts written down months or years after the events, or accounts from uneducated or irresponsible persons, we find abundance of marvellous incidents; when, as here, we have almost contemporary accounts at first hand from sober-minded witnesses, the statement of the marvellous is reduced to a minimum. But the peculiarly instructive feature of the Wesley case is that we can see how the witnesses, whilst in the earlier letters they narrate of their own personal experience only comparatively tame and uninteresting episodes, allow their imaginations to embellish the experiences of other members of the household; and that these same embellishments *nine years later* are incorporated in the first-hand accounts as genuine items of personal experience.' And in seeking an explanation of the records, he appears to fasten on a morbid craving for notoriety and excitement on the part of Hetty Wesley,² and he remarks that 'the

¹ *Works*, xiii. 459-64.

² 'Mehetabel (Hetty), with a hypothetical admirer, is accredited with their authorship. She appears to have been in a peculiar manner

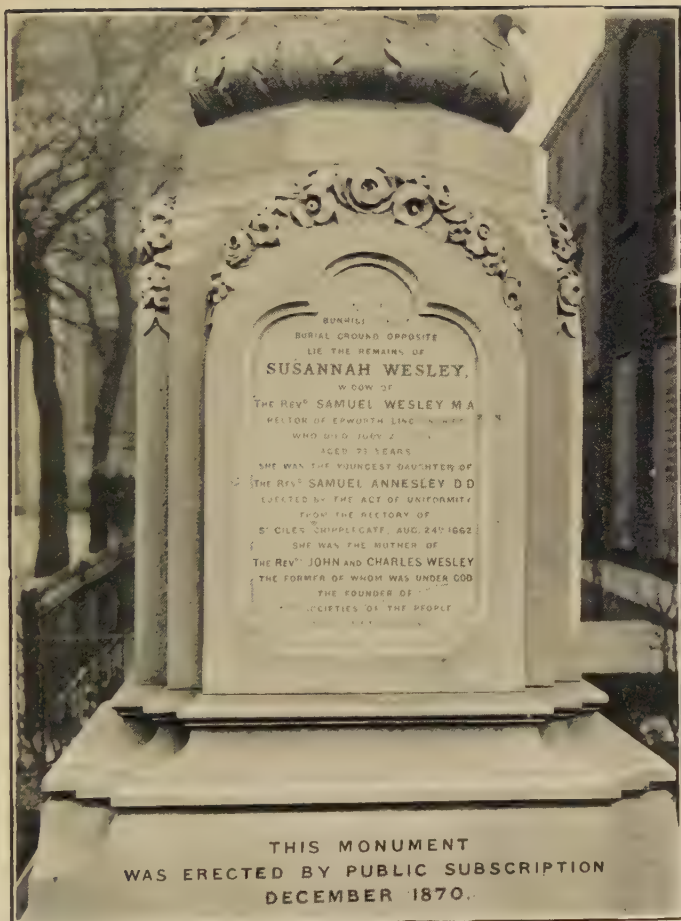
explanations adopted by the sympathetic spectators repeat accurately their individual beliefs and temperament, or the current traditions of the country at the time ;' and adds, 'In the Wesley household, as in most modern outbreaks, the disturbances were supposed to indicate a spirit of a doubtful character.'

As to Wesley's moral state at this time, he afterwards wrote, 'The next six or seven years were spent at school ; where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eyes of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers, morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by, was, (1) not being so bad as other people ; (2) having still a kindness for religion ; and (3) reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.'¹

Tyerman is hasty enough to conclude from this that Wesley 'entered the Charterhouse a saint, and left it a sinner.' He is justly rebuked by the more cautious words of a very careful and life-long student of the entire round of Wesleyan and Methodist history, and who is probably more familiar with the details than any living man at the present time—Dr. James H. Rigg—who says, referring to Wesley's

connected with the noises. "My sister Hetty, I find, was particularly troubled," says Samuel, in a letter requesting more information. "It never followed me as it did Hetty," says Emily, in her answer. Once immediately after the noise Mr. Wesley jumped up and called Hetty, "who was alone in the house." "Sister Hetty trembled strongly in her sleep while it knocked," says Susanna.—Wedgwood, p. 19.

¹ *Journal*, May 24, 1738.



Photo]

[Rev. T. E. Brighden.

SUSANNA WESLEY'S MONUMENT IN THE CITY ROAD, LONDON.

words just quoted, 'Such is the sentence which Wesley, the sternest of judges in such a case, pronounced on his own moral and religious state when he was at the Charterhouse—a sentence pronounced, it must be remembered, at a time when all Wesley's judgments as to such cases were far more severe than they became as revised, after many years' experience, in his later life. It was in 1738 that he so wrote of himself. It is clear that Wesley never lost, even at the Charterhouse, a tender respect for religion, the fear of God, and the forms of Christian propriety. That he was at this time unconverted there can be no doubt; but when Mr. Tyerman, with such awful emphasis, tells us that having gone to the Charterhouse a "saint"-child, at ten years of age, he left it "a sinner" at seventeen, he uses language which can scarcely fail to convey an altogether exaggerated impression as to the character of the boy's moral and spiritual faults and failings. . . . Isaac Taylor says, with reference to the privations and oppressions which Wesley endured at school, that "he learned as a boy to suffer wrongfully with cheerful patience, and to conform himself to cruel despotisms without acquiring either the slave's temper or the despot's. . . ." For my part, I cannot help thinking that not a little grace must have been still working in the soul of the brave and patient boy, to enable him to bear himself as he did. Wesley must have carried a heart, not only bright and hopeful, but forgiving, not only elastic and vigorous, but patient and generous, or he could not have looked back in after days on the years spent at the Charterhouse, not only without bitterness, but with pleasure, and, to use Southey's phrase,

have retained so great a predilection for the place that he made it his custom to walk annually through the scene of his schoolboy years. . . . It was no slight evidence of at least the powerful restraining influence of religion that Wesley passed through such an ordeal as his six or seven years' residence at the Charterhouse without contracting any taint of vice.¹

With a school exhibition of £40 per annum, obtained at the Charterhouse, Wesley proceeded to Oxford, entering Christ Church as a commoner on July 13, 1720. He had been preceded at Oxford by his brother Samuel, his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, and his mother's father.

He was now thrown into circumstances entirely new to him. Hitherto, he had had but little experience of the world. At home he would not be altogether ignorant of the rude, untutored, boorish character of many of the Epworth parishioners. But these would create only sentiments of disgust and revulsion in him, as would the visions of youthful wickedness to which he would be introduced at the Charterhouse by one hundred youths gathered from such homes as the time produced, homes in which the cultivation of virtue would certainly not generally be of a high order. This was no favourable ground for the development of lofty moral character in one disposed to yield to its influence; but, as the conscience and judgment of the young Wesley had been thoroughly instructed and disciplined, he would probably only feel shocked and revolted. He who would not perform the common offices of life without a reason would not be likely unreasoningly to yield

¹ *The Living Wesley.*

to the deceits of wrongdoing. And by how much he resisted the evil, by so much would he be strengthened for further resistance.

At this stage of his moral training, and at a very susceptible age, he entered the University—‘a gay, sprightly, and virtuous youth, full of good classics, and also with some knowledge of Hebrew.’¹ Sad indeed is the picture of University life in the eighteenth century, as presented by our most trustworthy historians. If it were not wholly bad, and the worst accounts do not warrant such a supposition, though the gleams of light in the dark picture are but few, yet the University reflected the spirit of an age which by its heartlessness, its indifference, its frivolity—in one word its utter worldliness—was widely severed from the present one, so proud of its truth, its earnestness, its energy, and its high and noble aims.² Idleness, trifling, hard drinking, lewdness, gambling, were common. Crosse’s words to his mother, often quoted, written a little later in the century, show what awaited the unsuspecting freshman. ‘Oxford,’ he says, ‘is a perfect hell upon earth. What chance is there for an unfortunate lad, just come from school, with no one to watch and care for him—no guide? I often saw my tutor carried off perfectly intoxicated.’³ Happily, Wesley was not without a guide. True it was an unseen, but not less a real, one. His heart was held too firmly in his mother’s hand for him to have been easily dragged downwards. Tyerman does not hesitate to take a pessimistic view of Wesley’s religious state during his early years at

¹ Rigg, *The Living Wesley*. ² J. R. Green, *Oxford Studies*.

³ *Ibid.*

Oxford. But Tyerman was better at collecting facts than at drawing inferences from them.

There is absolutely not a whisper of any moral delinquency in Wesley. He was not an idler, as his progress showed, still less was he a profligate, or anything approaching it. He probably walked on the highest plane of Oxford life, far above the depth of immorality which characterized many of those around him. As to extravagance, he had not the means of indulging in it, if he were disposed so to do, even though the £40 of his exhibition be multiplied by four, as Overton suggests.

The term of Wesley's residence in Oxford may be separated into two distinct periods, of which the dividing line is his election to a Fellowship at Lincoln College, and his removal thither. Of the earlier portion of the former period our information is but scanty, and we are left very much to conjecture. We may estimate the influences amidst which he pursued his way, we may keep in mind the inner light which never failed him, and we may mark the progress which he made and the position he gained. But little of the correspondence of the period has been preserved. He may not yet have adopted his practice of carefully preserving all letters that he received. It was in 1740 that he 'spent two days in Oxford looking over the letters he had received for the sixteen or eighteen years last past.'¹

A contemporary thus writes of him in 1724, when he was about twenty-one years of age, 'He appeared the very sensible and acute collegian, baffling every one by the subtleties of logic, and laughing at them for

¹ *Journal*, January 3, 1740.

being so easily routed, a young fellow of the finest classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments.'¹ One of his earliest biographers, the friend of his later days, the Rev. Henry Moore, says, 'His perfect knowledge of the classics gave a smooth polish to his wit, and an air of superior elegance to all his compositions. He had already begun to amuse himself occasionally with writing verses, though most of his poetical pieces of this period were either imitations or translations of the Latin. Sometime in this year, however, he wrote an imitation of the 85th Psalm, which he sent to his father, who says, "I like your verses on the 85th Psalm, and would not have you bury your talent."' A letter to his brother Samuel at this time, frequently quoted, shows a sprightliness of style both in prose and verse, while a sentence reveals a tinge of sadness, 'The two things which I most wished for of almost anything in the world, were to see my mother and Westminster once again; and to see them both together was so far above my expectations, that I almost looked upon it as next to an impossibility. I have been so very frequently disappointed when I had set my heart on any pleasure, that I will never again depend on any before it comes.'

At present he is apparently without any distinct purpose in life, and though there is every reason to believe him to be strictly moral, and free from any viciousness of temper or desire, yet so far there is no prominent indication of a serious settling down to any great pursuit, neither are there evidences of any deep spirituality of character.

¹ Badcock, in *Westminster Magazine*.

‘If the tree is to be judged by its fruits,’ says Canon Overton, ‘Wesley’s days at Charterhouse and Christ Church could not have been idly spent, for he carried with him an amount of mental culture which would compare favourably with that of some of the best specimens of these days of incessant examination. Mental culture, however, is one thing, spiritual growth another. There are abundant traces of the former, none of the latter, between his leaving Epworth and his last year at Christ Church.’

Although his fees were made as light as possible, he seems to have been in frequent financial straits, from which he was occasionally relieved by the kindness of friends and by intermittent supplies from the often scanty store at home. He does not appear to have been in vigorous health in these earlier years of his college career. Such health as he had, he preserved by temperance; for he tells us, ‘When I grew up, in consequence of reading Dr. Cheyne, I chose to eat sparingly and drink water. This was another great means of continuing my health, till I was about seven and twenty.’¹ He names this book in a letter to his mother dated November 1, 1724.

Such was Wesley up to his twenty-first year. He thus speaks of himself: ‘Being removed to the University for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually and, for the most part, very contentedly in some or other known sin—indeed,

¹ *Journal*, June 28, 1770.

with some intermissions and short struggles, especially before and after the Holy Communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a year. I cannot tell what I hoped to be saved by now, when I was continually sinning against that little light I had; unless by those transient fits of what many divines taught me to call repentance.' ¹

But better times are approaching, and though many years elapsed before Wesley attained rest and peace and Christian joy, yet from this time forward, and with accelerating earnestness, he seeks the salvation which he had in view. A very gracious change in his life and character now begins. Towards the close of 1724, he, being then in his twenty-second year, began to think of entering into deacon's orders, a step on which he expended much careful thought. Some doubts arising in his mind as to the motives which ought to influence him in taking Holy Orders, he frankly proposed them to his father; who, in his reply, dated January 26, 1725, after sundry advices, adds, 'But the principal spring or motive, to which all the former should be only secondary, must certainly be the glory of God, and the service of His Church in the edification of our neighbour. And woe to him who with any meaner leading view attempts so sacred a work.' He then mentions the qualifications necessary, and adds, 'You ask me which is the best commentary on the Bible. I answer, the Bible itself. For the several paraphrases and translations of it in the polyglot, compared with the original, and with one another, are, in my opinion, to an honest, devout, industrious, and humble man, infinitely preferable to

¹ *Journal*, May 24, 1738.

any comment I ever saw. But Grotius is the best, for the most part, especially on the Old Testament.' He hints that he thought it too soon for him to take Orders. His mother, however, took a different view. Writing in the course of the next month, she says, 'I think the sooner you are a deacon the better, because it may be an inducement to greater application in the study of practical divinity, which, of all other studies, I humbly conceive to be the best for candidates for Orders.' And she goes on to say, 'The alteration of your temper has occasioned me much speculation. I, who am apt to be sanguine, hope that it may proceed from the operations of God's Holy Spirit, that by taking off your relish for earthly enjoyments, He may prepare and dispose your mind for a more serious and close application to things of a more sublime and spiritual nature. If it be so, happy are you, if you cherish those dispositions! And now, in good earnest, resolve to make religion the business of your life; for, after all, that is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary. All things besides are comparatively little to the purposes of life. I wish you would now enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have, the satisfaction of knowing it will abundantly reward your pains; if you have not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in a tragedy. This matter deserves great consideration by all, but especially by those designed for the Ministry, who ought, above all things, to make their own calling and election sure, lest, *after they have preached to others,*

*they themselves should be cast away.'*¹ Nothing could be more likely to move him to earnestness of purpose than such words from the pen of his dearly loved and always honoured mother. He began now to apply himself with diligence to the study of divinity. His father soon intimated that he had changed his mind, and was inclined to his taking Orders that summer. 'But in the first place,' says he, 'if you love yourself or me, pray heartily.' And again he wrote, 'God fit you for your great work! Fast, watch, and pray; believe, love, endure, and be happy; towards which you shall never want the most ardent prayers of your affectionate father.'²

Wesley afterwards wrote, 'When I was about twenty-two, my father pressed me to enter Holy Orders. At the same time, the providence of God directing me to Kempis's *Christian's Pattern*, I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry with Kempis for being too strict, though I read him only in Dean Stanhope's translation. Yet I had frequently much comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before.'

Wesley's objections to Kempis related to two points in particular, which he thus expresses, 'I cannot think that when God sent us into the world he had irreversibly decreed that we should be perpetually miserable in it. If our taking up our cross imply our bidding adieu to all joy and satisfaction, how is it reconcilable with what Solomon expressly affirms of religion, that *her ways are ways*

¹ Moore, i. 123, 124.

² *Ibid.*, i. 133.

of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace? Another of his tenets is, that all mirth or pleasure is useless, if not sinful, and that nothing is an affliction to a good man—that he ought to thank God even for sending him misery. This, in my opinion, is contrary to God's design in afflicting us; for though He chasteneth those whom He loveth, yet it is in order to humble them.' With characteristic diffidence, he again applies to his father and mother for help in his difficulties. The former replied, 'As for Thomas à Kempis, all the world are apt to strain either on one side or the other; but, for all that, mortification is still an indispensable Christian duty. The world is a syren, and we must have a care of her; and if the *young man will rejoice in his youth*, yet let him take care that his joys be innocent; and, in order to this, remember, that *for all these things God will bring him into judgment*. I have only this to add of my friend and old companion, that, making some grains of allowance, he may be read to great advantage; nay, that it is almost impossible to peruse him seriously without admiring, and I think in some measure imitating, his heroic strains of humility, piety, and devotion. But I reckon you have, before this, received your mother's letter, who has leisure to bould the matter to the bran.' Yes, his mother had threshed out the matter for him, closing her counsels with, 'Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, of the innocence or malignity of actions—take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the

strength and authority of your body over your mind ; that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.' ¹

Another subject on which he differed from à Kempis, and on which he desired his mother's views, was the doctrine of Predestination, a subject that was afterwards to occupy much of his thought and time. He thus states his views, 'If it was inevitably decreed from eternity that such a determinate part of mankind should be saved, and none beside them, a vast majority of the world were only born to death, without so much as a possibility of avoiding it. How is this consistent with either the Divine Justice or Mercy? Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery? Is it just to punish man for crimes which he could not but commit? That God should be the author of sin and injustice, which must, I think, be the consequence of maintaining this opinion, is a contradiction to the clearest ideas we have of the Divine nature and perfections.' Mrs. Wesley replies: 'I have Kempis by me ; but have not read him lately. I cannot recollect the passages you mention ; but, believing you do him justice, I do positively aver that he is extremely in the wrong in that impious, I was about to say

¹ Wesley entertained a high estimate of à Kempis's work, which increased as time went on. Ten years from the present date he published a corrected edition in octavo, with a prolonged and commendatory preface on the usefulness of the work, including directions for reading it with profit. This was followed by a small pocket edition ; and this again by *An Extract of the Christian's Pattern*, and a further extract entitled *A Companion to the Altar* ; he also afterwards prepared and printed a Latin edition for use in the Kingswood school. To Dr. John Byrom he once declared that Thomas à Kempis was next to the Bible.

blasphemous, suggestion that God, by an irreversible decree, has determined any man to be miserable even in this world. His intentions, as Himself, are holy, just, and good ; and all the miseries incident to men here or hereafter proceed from themselves.'

Another difficulty, on which he sought counsel, had reference to the minatory sentences of the Athanasian Creed. He was too minute and conscientious to allow any great question to escape him without thorough investigation.

Other difficulties were suggested to him by reading Jeremy Taylor's works, and, as usual, he opened his mind upon them all to his best friend. Taylor had affirmed that, 'Whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not, therefore still be sorrowful for ever for having sinned.' Wesley remarks, 'That we can never be so certain of the pardon of our sins, as to be assured they will never rise up against us, I firmly believe. We know that they will infallibly do so, if we apostatize ; and I am not satisfied what evidence there can be of our final perseverance, till we have finished our course. But I am persuaded we may know if we are NOW in a state of salvation, since that is expressly promised in the Scriptures to our sincere endeavours, and we are surely able to judge of our own sincerity.' We may say with his biographer, Moore, 'He saw *the blessing* even now, but not *the way to attain it*.'

Of this period he writes, at a subsequent date, 'In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met with Bishop Taylor's *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*. In reading several parts of this book, I was greatly affected ;

that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate to God all my thoughts, and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced that there was no medium, but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, to the devil. Can any serious person doubt of this, or find a medium between serving God and serving the devil? He adds, 'In the year 1726¹ I met with Kempis's *Christian's Pattern*. The nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in a stronger light than ever it had done before. I saw that giving even all my life to God (supposing it possible to do this, and go no further) would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea, all my heart, to Him. I saw that "simplicity of intention and purity of affection," one design in all we speak or do, and one desire ruling all our tempers, are indeed "the wings of the soul," without which she can never ascend to the mount of God.'

Another book to which his attention was drawn, and which became a great favourite with both the Wesleys in their Oxford days, was Scougall's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*. This it was that Charles Wesley put into Whitefield's hands soon after their first meeting, and of which Whitefield says, 'While

¹ *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. There is a slight discrepancy here. The date given is 1726; but the letter to his mother, already quoted, in which he asks for her opinion on the difficulties suggested to him in à Kempis, bears date 1725. But, as the *Plain Account* was written forty years after, in the midst of incessant labours, the error is not surprising. Other discrepancies in Wesley's dates may have the same explanation.

reading in it that true religion was a union of the soul with God, or Christ formed within us, a ray of light divine instantly darted in upon my soul, and from that moment, but not till then, did I know that I must be a new creature. . . . Though I had fasted, watched, and prayed, and received the Sacrament so long, yet I never knew what true religion was, till God sent me that excellent treatise by the hands of my never-to-be-forgotten friend.'¹

An incident occurred about this time, which has a special interest, as being the first recorded instance of that direct appeal to individuals on the subject of personal religion which he afterwards practised on every available opportunity and with such signal results. It is thus related by him, 'About a year and a half ago I stole out of company at eight in the evening with a young gentleman with whom I was intimate. As we took a turn in an aisle of St. Mary's Church, in expectation of a young lady's funeral, with whom we were both acquainted, I asked him if he really thought himself my friend, and, if he did, why he would not do me all the good he could. He began to protest; in which I cut him short by desiring him to oblige me in an instance, which he could not deny to be in his own power; to let me have the pleasure of making him a whole Christian, to which I knew he was at least half persuaded already; that he could not do me a greater kindness, as both of us would be fully convinced when we came to follow that young woman. He turned exceedingly serious, and kept something of that disposition ever since. Yesterday was a

¹ Whitefield's early *Journal*.



J. Adams-Aclon, Sculp.]

[Photo Turner & Co.

THE WESLEY CENTENARY STATUE, CITY ROAD, LONDON,
ERECTED MARCH 2, 1891.

fortnight, he died of a consumption. I saw him three days before he died ; and, on the Sunday following, did him the last good office I could here, by preaching his funeral sermon, which was his desire when living.'

Hitherto he seems to have waged a single-handed combat, and to have struggled manfully alone, cheered and counselled only by the helpful words from his distant home. But about this time he met with the inestimable benefit of a Christian friend, which, he says, he never had till now. Who this friend was has not been disclosed ; but Wesley was so far encouraged that he says, ' I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin in word or deed. I began to aim at and pray for inward holiness.' Added to this, in pursuance of an advice given by Bishop Taylor, he began to take a more exact account than he had done before of the manner in which he employed his time, writing down how he occupied every hour. His practice was to carry with him a small memorandum book, in which a single page was assigned to each day, and a single line to each hour. By means of signs and contracted words he was enabled to record how every hour was spent, from four o'clock in the morning, when he rose, to nine at night, when he retired. Several of these *diaries* have been preserved.

This he continued to do, wherever he was, for many years. When he left England, ten years afterwards, the variety of scenes through which he passed induced him also to transcribe, from time to time, the more material parts of his diary, adding here and there such

little reflections as occurred to his mind. Both these series of memoranda were intended only for his own eye; but in 1739, after his return from Georgia, in order to vindicate himself from some aspersions on his character, made by a certain Mr. Williams, he published 'extracts' from the Journal, and, at intervals of two or three years, continued the practice to the end of his days. Twenty-one of these 'extracts' were published, and form what is now so well known as *John Wesley's Journal*.

Wesley's progress thus far in Christian knowledge and character is definite and decided. Canon Overton remarks, 'While thoroughly believing in the reality and importance of a later change, can any one deny that, from this time forward to the very close of his long life, John Wesley led a most holy, devoted life, aiming only at the glory of God, the welfare of his own soul, and the benefit of his fellow-creatures? and if that is not to be a good Christian, what is?' The question whether he was a Christian or not until the Aldersgate Street incident is a matter of definition. At the time when he affirmed himself not to be one, he knew as well as Overton, and better, what he meant by being a Christian.

The time drew near when it was expected that the election of a Fellow of Lincoln College would take place, and his friends exerted themselves to secure it in his behalf. When Dr. Morley, the Rector of Lincoln, was spoken to on the subject, he said, 'I will inquire into Mr. Wesley's character.' He did so, and gave him leave to stand a candidate, and afterwards became his friend in the matter, and used all the influence he had in his favour. It was not possible

for his uncommon seriousness to escape his opponents, who poured upon him their banter and ridicule. His father reminded him that it was 'a callow virtue' that could not bear to be laughed at; adding, 'I think our Captain and Master endured something more for us before He entered into glory; and unless we follow His steps, in vain do we hope to share that glory with Him.' And his mother wrote, 'If it be a weak virtue that cannot bear being laughed at, I am sure it is a strong and well-confirmed virtue that can bear the test of a brisk buffoonery.'

Notwithstanding the opposition that was raised against him, his high character for learning and diligence was rewarded by success, and he was elected to the fellowship on Thursday, March 17, 1726. His father very emphatically expressed his gratification in a letter of April 1. 'I have both yours, since your election; in both you express yourself as becometh you.' And then, after referring to the difficulty he had in providing for the expenses of the election, he goes on to say, 'What will be my own fate before the summer is over, God knows; *sed passi graviora*—wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln.' And his mother tells him, in her usual strain of piety, 'I think myself obliged to return great thanks to Almighty God for giving you good success at Lincoln. Let whoever He pleased be the instrument, to Him, and to Him alone, the glory appertain.'¹

This marks an important epoch in Wesley's career. He has already begun to seek in earnest the salvation of his soul, subjecting himself to severe discipline,

¹ Moore. Several letters written to Wesley by his father at this period are given by Tyerman in *Life and Times of Samuel Wesley*.

and putting his whole conduct under the most rigorous control ; thus laying the foundation of those habits of life which were afterwards so conspicuously illustrated in him. In this resolute purpose to promote his growth in goodness, he seized upon his removal from Christ Church to free himself from some associations which he felt to be prejudicial. Reviewing this period of his life some years later, he says, 'Removing soon after [he had entered Holy Orders] to another college, I executed a resolution which I was before convinced was of the utmost importance—shaking off at once all my trifling acquaintance. I began to see more and more the value of time. I applied myself closer to study. I watched more carefully against actual sins. I advised others to be religious, according to that scheme of religion by which I modelled my own life. But meeting now with Mr. Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call*, although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the Law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying Him, as I had never done before. And by my continued endeavour to keep His whole Law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation.'¹

This very significant passage shows the depth of Wesley's purpose to reform his whole life and to

¹ *Journal*, May 24, 1738.

bring it, as far as he was able, into entire accord with the Divine will. The fervour of his appeal for Divine help in this, and the carefulness with which he endeavoured to regulate his outward conduct, are also evident. Nor must the fact of his coming into contact for the first time with the writings of William Law be overlooked, considering their influence upon his future views and his subsequent relations to their author. At an early period he published carefully prepared abridgments of the *Christian Perfection* and the *Serious Call*.

Wesley received helpful and stimulating letters from his father. In one he exhorts him to master St. Chrysostom, and the Articles, and the Form of Ordination; to bear up stoutly against the world, etc., to keep a good, an honest, and a pious heart, and to pray hard and watch hard. In another, his father intimates that he had designed an edition of the Bible, in 8vo, in Hebrew, Chaldee, Septuagint, and Vulgate, and, desiring his son's assistance, says, 'What I desire of you is, first, that you would immediately fall to work, and read diligently the Hebrew text in the polyglot, and collate it exactly with the Vulgate, writing all, even the least, variations between them. To these I would have you add the Samaritan text. You may learn the Samaritan alphabet in a day. In twelve months' time, sticking close to it in the forenoons, you will get twice through the Pentateuch; for I have done it four times the last year, and am going over it the fifth. You shall not lose your reward, either in this or the other world.'¹

¹ Whitehead, i. 22.

He found a much more congenial society at Lincoln than he had been able to secure at Christ Church. Writing to his brother Samuel, he says, 'As far as I have ever observed, I never knew a college beside ours, whereof the members were so perfectly satisfied with one another, and so inoffensive to the other part of the University. All I have yet seen of the Fellows are both well-natured and well-bred; men admirably disposed as well to preserve peace and good neighbourhood among themselves, as to promote it wherever they have any acquaintance.'¹

Wesley had allowed his hair, which was of a light brown colour, to grow to sufficient length to reach to his shoulders. His mother advised him on the grounds of health to have it cut. Writing to his brother Samuel, he says, 'My mother's reason for my cutting off my hair, is because she fancies it prejudices my health. As to my looks, it would doubtless mend my complexion to have it off, by letting me get a little more colour, and perhaps it might contribute to my making a more genteel appearance. But these, till ill-health is added to them, I cannot persuade myself to be sufficient grounds for losing two or three pounds a year. I am ill enough able to spare them.' Five years after he wrote, 'As to my hair, I am much more sure, that what this enables me to do, is according to the Scripture, than I am that the length of it is contrary to it.'² His brother Samuel took a middle path, and

¹ *Works*, xii. 17. The Rev. John Telford, in his *Life of John Wesley*, has given interesting particulars respecting Wesley's college appointments; *vide* pp. 46, 47.

² *Original Letters by the Rev. John Wesley and his Friends*. By Dr. Priestley. Birmingham, 1791.

advised him to have it cut *shorter*, and this advice he followed. In the former letter he asserts, what his whole after life confirmed, 'Leisure and I have taken leave of one another; I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged to me.'

Charles Wesley came up to Oxford from Westminster School, and entered Christ Church soon after John had left it. For some months after his arrival in Oxford, Charles is said to have been moral in his conduct and very agreeable in his spirit and manners; but the strict authority over him which his brother Samuel had exercised, as his tutor and guardian, being now withdrawn, he was far from severe and earnest in his studies. After a while, however, he became studious, though his spirit was not devout. His brother John wrote, 'He pursued his studies diligently, and led a regular, harmless life; but if I spoke to him about religion, he would warmly answer, "What, would you have me to be a saint all at once?" and would hear no more.'

Wesley spent from April 26 to September 21 of this year at Epworth and Wroot, his father having both livings in his charge, residing occasionally in the small rectory at the latter place. It was a happy time, during which he read prayers and preached twice every Sunday, and otherwise helped his father as he was able. He pursued his studies meanwhile, and enjoyed the frequent opportunities of conversing with his honoured parents, keeping a diary of what passed, noting the subjects of conversation, and the practical observations made by his seniors, and sometimes adding his own.¹

¹ Whitehead, i. 403.

The acquisition of Wroot added but little to the domestic comforts of the Epworth family, for the profits barely covered the expense of serving it; while the country around was little better than a swamp.¹

The following extract from one of Samuel Wesley's letters may serve to give an insight into the state of things in the Epworth home. 'I had been thrown behind by a series of misfortunes. My parsonage barn was blown down ere I had recovered the taking my living; my house, great part of it, burnt down about two years since; my flax, great part of my income, now in my own hands (hemp was the principal crop of the neighbourhood), I doubt wilfully fired and burnt in the night, whilst I was last in London; my income sunk about one half by the low price of grain; and my credit lost by the taking away my regiment. I was brought to Lincoln Castle June 23 last past. About three weeks since, my very unkind people, thinking they had not yet done enough, have, in the night, stabbed my three cows, which were a great part of my poor numerous family's subsistence. For which God forgive them.'

Wesley had occasionally written some verse of varied character, and while thus at Epworth he began a paraphrase on Psalm civ. 1-18, which he afterwards finished. It shows his aptitude in poetical composition, as do the exquisite translations from the German, Spanish, and French languages, with which he at a later period enriched the Church's psalter. His mother's counsel may have checked his exercises in this direction—'I would not have you

¹ Tyerman, *Life and Times of Samuel Wesley*.

leave off making verses ; rather make poetry your diversion, though never your business.' The poet of Methodism had not yet been revealed.

Wesley returned to Oxford, September 21, 1726, and resumed his studies. His literary character was now established in the University. He was recognized by all parties as a man of talents and an excellent critic in the learned languages ; his skill in logic was universally known and acknowledged, and his compositions were distinguished by an elegant simplicity of style and justness of thought that strongly marked the excellence of his classical taste. The high opinion that was entertained of him was publicly expressed by his being chosen Greek Lecturer and Moderator of the Classes (November 6), though he had been elected Fellow only eight months, was little more than twenty-three years of age, and had not yet proceeded Master of Arts.¹ His duties commenced in the October term of this year.

Canon Overton gives the following explanation of the duties attached to these offices :—'Greek lecturer does not mean teacher of Greek generally ; it is a technical term the explanation of which illustrates the tradition of piety as well as learning which belonged to Lincoln College. The object was to secure some sort of religious instruction to all the undergraduates ; and for this purpose a special officer was appointed, with the modest stipend of £20 a year, who was to hold a lecture every week in the College Hall, which all the undergraduates were to attend, on the Greek Testament. As became a

¹ Whitehead.

learned society, the lecture was to be on the original language, but the real object was to teach divinity, not Greek. The duty of "Moderator of the Classes" was to sit in the College Hall, and preside over the "Disputations," which were held at Lincoln College every day in the week except Sunday.¹

For several years he held this office, in which he says he could not avoid acquiring some degree of expertness in arguing, and especially in detecting plausible fallacies, which served him in good stead in his many controversies; and he praised God for giving him 'this honest art.'²

Wesley took his Master's degree on February 14, 1727. He delivered three lectures on the occasion—one on natural philosophy, *De Anima Brutorum*; another on moral philosophy, *De Julio Cæsare*; and a third on religion, *De Amore Dei*. He is said to have gained considerable reputation in his disputation. His degree gave him one advantage, which he gladly hailed; it set him more at liberty to choose his own employment, and since, as he said, he knew his own deficiencies best, and which of them it was most necessary should be supplied, he hoped greatly to profit by his freedom. He had in anticipation laid down the following plan of studies, from which he did not suffer himself to deviate. Mondays and Tuesdays were devoted to the Greek and Latin classical historians and poets; Wednesdays to logic and ethics; Thursdays to Hebrew and Arabic; Fridays to metaphysics and natural philosophy; Saturdays to oratory and poetry, chiefly composing; Sundays to divinity. In the intermediate hours between these

¹ *John Wesley*, p. 20.

² *Works*, x. 353.

more fixed studies, he read French, and a great variety of modern authors in almost every department of science. He followed the method of first reading an author regularly through; then, in a second reading, to transcribe important passages, either for the information they conveyed, or for their beauty of expression.¹

In one of his sermons he makes the following observations on his conduct at this time :—²

‘ When it pleased God to give me a settled resolution to be, not a nominal, but a real Christian (being then about twenty-two years of age), my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself. But there was this difference : I knew my own ignorance; they did not know theirs. I faintly endeavoured to help them, but in vain. Meanwhile I found, by sad experience, that even their harmless conversation, so called, damped all my good resolutions. But how to get rid of them was the question which I resolved in my mind again and again. I saw no possible way, unless it should please God to remove me to another college. He did so, in a manner utterly contrary to all human probability. I was elected Fellow of a college where I knew not one person. I foresaw abundance of people would come to see me, either out of friendship, civility, or curiosity, and that I should have offers of acquaintance new and old. But I had now fixed my plan. Entering now, as it were, into a new world, I resolved to have no acquaintance by chance, but by choice, and to choose such only as I had reason to believe would help me on my way to heaven. In consequence of this, I narrowly observed the temper and behaviour of all that visited me. I saw no reason to think that the greater part of these truly loved or feared God. Such acquaintance, therefore, I did not choose; I could not expect they would

¹ Moore, i. 146.

² *Works*, vi. 473.

do me any good. Therefore, when any of these came to see me, I behaved as courteously as I could. But to the question, "When will you come to see me?" I returned no answer. When they had come a few times, and found I still declined returning the visit, I saw them no more. And, I bless God, this has been my invariable rule for about three-score years. I knew many reflections would follow. But that did not move me, as I knew full well, it was my calling to go "through evil report and good report."

These last words are appropriately placed in the borders of Vertue's three engraved portraits of Wesley, after the painting by Williams.

He seems at this time to have cherished the spirit of a recluse, for he says in one of his letters to his mother (March 19, 1727), 'The conversation of one or two persons, whom you may have heard me speak of (I hope never without gratitude), first took off my relish for most other pleasures; so far that I despised them in comparison of that. I have since proceeded a step further; to slight them absolutely. And I am so little at present in love with even company—the most elegant entertainment next to books—that, unless the persons have a religious turn of thought, I am much better pleased without them. I think it is the settled temper of my soul that I should prefer, at least for some time, such a retirement as would seclude me from all the world, to the station I am now in. Not that this is by any means unpleasant to me, but I imagine it would be more improving to be in a place where I might confirm or implant in my mind what habits I would, without interruption, before the flexibility of youth be over.'¹

¹ *Works*, xii. 10.

A school in Yorkshire was proposed to him. It lay in a little vale, 'so pent up between two hills, that it is scarcely accessible on any side; so that you can expect little company from without, and within there is none at all.' This seemed to offer what he desired, but from some unexplained cause the proposal was not renewed. It will afterwards be seen how often, when in the excitement of his great public work, he cast longing eyes towards such conditions of peace and seclusion, from which he was again and again diverted by the trumpet call of duty. As, on one occasion, after preaching at an attractive place, he exclaimed, 'How many days should I spend here if I was to do my own will? Not so; I am "to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." Therefore this is the first day I ever spent here, and perhaps it may be the last.' And again, 'How gladly could I spend a few weeks in this delightful solitude! But I must not rest yet. As long as God gives me strength to labour, I am to use it.'¹

It must have been somewhere about this time that he formed the habit of early rising, which he continued throughout his life. In a sermon on 'Redeeming the Time,' he makes the following statement:—'If any one desires to know exactly what quantity of sleep his own constitution requires, he may very easily make the experiment which I made about sixty years ago. I then waked every night about twelve or one, and lay awake for some time. I readily concluded that this arose from my lying longer in bed than nature required. To be satisfied, I procured an alarum, which waked me the next morning at seven

¹ *Works*, iv. 57, 138.

(near an hour earlier than I rose the day before); yet I lay awake again at night. The second morning I rose at six; but, notwithstanding this, I lay awake the second night. The third morning I rose at five; but, nevertheless, I lay awake the third night. The fourth morning I rose at four (as, by the grace of God, I have done ever since); and I lay awake no more. And I do not now lie awake (taking the year round) a quarter of an hour together in a month. By the same experiment, rising earlier and earlier every morning, may any one find how much sleep he really wants.'

The Rector of Epworth and Wroot was now advancing in years and infirmities. He had led a very active life, had passed through much trouble, and had known not a few hardships. His health was enfeebled, and the parish of Wroot was not in the highest degree healthy. It was a little village distant from Epworth about five miles, and surrounded by bogs, so that often when the waters were out the journey from one place to the other could be made only by boat, and in winter was even dangerous. It had gained the name of Wroot-out-of-England, from its inaccessible position. It seemed desirable that John should come to Epworth and help his father in his work. Accordingly, after paying a visit to his brother Samuel at Westminster, he went down to Lincolnshire early in August, 1727. Wroot was assigned to him as his sphere of labour, himself and his father occasionally changing. He had not long resided there before he was seized with ague, a disease peculiar to the neighbourhood, rendered endemic by the conditions of the land. With this

disease upon him he travelled on horseback to Oxford to oblige Dr. Morley, returning in the same manner to Wroot after a few days' stay, though several times very ill on the road. Often in the future was he both to travel and to labour when in the grip of disease!

The following letter, written to Wesley at the close of this year, by a Fellow of his own college, confirms the assertion by one of his earliest biographers, that 'Mr. Wesley's general knowledge and agreeable conversation endeared him to all his acquaintance at Oxford. He was a most engaging and instructive companion; open and communicative to his friends, and civil and obliging to all':—

'Lincoln College, December 28, 1727.

'SIR,

'Yesterday I had the satisfaction of receiving your kind and obliging letter, whereby you have given me a singular instance of that goodness and civility which is essential to your character; and strongly confirmed to me the many encomiums which are given you in this respect, by all who have the happiness to know you. This makes me infinitely desirous of your acquaintance. And when I consider those shining qualities which I hear daily mentioned in your praise, I cannot but lament the great misfortune we all suffer, in the absence of so agreeable a person from the college. But I please myself with the thoughts of seeing you here on chapter-day, and of the happiness we shall have in your company in the summer. In the mean time, I return you my most sincere thanks for this favour, and assure you that if it should ever lie in my power to serve you, no one will be more ready to do it, than,

'Sir,

'Your most obliged and most humble servant,

'LEW. FENTON.'

It did not seem improbable that, in the ordinary course of things, Wesley would remain in the retirement of parish life, helping his father, to the end of his days, and possibly succeeding him at Epworth. But towards the close of 1729 he was summoned by Dr. Morley, the Rector of Lincoln College, to return to Oxford. Dr. Morley says, 'At a meeting of the society, just before I left college, to consider of the proper method to preserve discipline and good government, among several things agreed on, it was, in the opinion of all that were present, judged necessary that the junior Fellows, who should be chosen Moderators, shall in person attend the duties of their office, if they do not prevail on some of the Fellows to officiate for them. . . . We hope it may be as much for your advantage to reside at college as where you are, if you take pupils, or can get a curacy in the neighbourhood of Oxon. Your father may certainly have another curate, though not so much to his satisfaction; yet we are persuaded, that this will not move him to hinder your return to college, since the interest of college and obligation to statute require it.' ¹

Such a letter could receive but one answer. Wesley himself felt the attractions of University life, and his father, rigid alike in yielding and enforcing obedience to authority, had so high a regard for Dr. Morley, and remembered so thankfully his indebtedness to him, that he was accustomed to say, 'I can refuse Dr. Morley nothing.' Little did Wesley think, in taking leave of his little flock at Wroot and of the dear home at Epworth, what great issues

¹ Whitehead, i. 416.

depended on his entering again the shades of Lincoln College.

Wesley returned to Oxford on November 22, 1729. Oxford moreover now presented a new attraction to him. As was said above, his brother Charles had come up from Westminster School three years before; and during that time he had undergone a very marked change both in character and in habits, apparently without the use of any particular means. In his second year he began to be more serious in his general deportment, and to manifest a deeper concern for the salvation of his soul. That he might keep a stricter watch over himself, he asked his brother's counsel on the keeping of a diary, for noting the state of his mind and the doings of the day. He added, 'God has thought fit (it may be to increase my wariness) to deny me at present your company and assistance. It is through Him strengthening me, I trust to maintain my ground till we meet. And I hope that, neither before nor after that time, I shall relapse into my former state of insensibility. It is through your means, I firmly believe, that God will establish what He hath begun in me; and there is no one person I would so willingly have to be the instrument of good to me as you. It is owing in great measure to somebody's prayers (my mother's, most likely), that I am come to think as I do; for I cannot tell myself how or when I awoke out of my lethargy, only, that it was not long after you went away.'¹

As the year went on, he became more and more earnest in the pursuit of religion, and began to

¹ Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*.

exert himself in doing good in various ways, and in seeking to awaken attention to religion in the minds of some of his fellow-students. In May of this year he wrote to his brother, 'Providence has at present put it into my power to do some good. I have a modest, well-disposed youth lives next me ; and have been, thank God, somewhat instrumental in keeping him so. He had got into vile hands and is now broke loose. He durst not receive the Sacrament, but at the usual times, for fear of being laughed at. By convincing him of the duty of frequent communicating, I have prevailed on both of us to receive once a week. I earnestly long for, and desire, the blessing God is about to send me in you. I am sensible *this* is my day of grace ; and that, upon my employing the time before our meeting and next parting, will in great measure depend my condition for eternity.'¹

John spent a few days of the following month in Oxford. Whether Charles referred to that time, or had any hope of a more prolonged intercourse with his brother, does not appear. In that brief visit, however, John was to see for the first time the beginning of what was to be so great a work in the earth, and to hear applied to a few struggling inquirers a contemptuous epithet which should become the symbol of earnest Christianity in all quarters of the globe. But to Charles, as the instrument, belongs the honour of initiating this work, let him therefore in his own words describe it. In writing to Dr. Chandler, he says, 'My first year at college I lost in diversions ; the next I set myself to study. Diligence

¹ Moore, i. 156.

led me into serious thinking ; I went to the weekly Sacrament, persuaded two or three young students to accompany me, and to observe the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the University. This gained me the harmless name of *Methodist*. In half a year after this my brother left his curacy at Epworth, and came to our assistance. We then proceeded regularly in our studies, and in doing what good we could to the bodies and souls of men.¹

It is indicative of the low condition of discipline in the University at the time, that a strict attention to its statutes should excite surprise. What was written of Oxford thirty years after too well reflects the condition of things at this time, as J. R. Green's *Oxford Studies*, and other historical works, clearly testify.²

How great issues have their origin in trifling incidents ! The life of a young and volatile collegian undergoes a change ; that young man becomes one of the sweetest psalmists the Christian Church has known. His numbers are chanted over the face of continents ; in them the Gospel is sung in many lands, and in many languages ; they feed the spiritual life of millions in all the earth. Crowned heads and toiling sons of the field alike sing them. But what is the significance of this name of reproach which is

¹ Whitehead, i. 99.

² 'The discipline of the University happened at this particular moment to be so lax that a gentleman commoner was under no restraint, and never called on to attend lectures, chapel, or hall. My tutor, an excellent and worthy man, according to the practice of all tutors of that moment, gave himself no concern about his pupils. I never saw him but during a fortnight, when I took it into my head to be taught trigonometry. The set of men with whom I lived were very pleasant, but very idle fellows. Our life was an imitation of high life in London, etc.'

fastened on three young men? The grouping of men by common designations, whether in derision only or by choice, binds them together. It gives them new common interests. It separates them from their fellows. It gives definiteness to half-formed professions. In this case it was a profession of severance from gay and negligent companions ; a profession of discipleship, of devotion to duty ; a profession of a desire, at least, to live a religious life. It became a flag around which others might rally. To-day it distinguishes more than twenty-five millions of people !

CHAPTER III

UNIVERSITY LIFE

OF this time Wesley writes, 'In the year 1729, I began not only to read, but to study the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion. Hence I saw, in a clearer and clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having the mind which was in Christ, and of walking as Christ also walked ; even of having, not some part only, but all the mind which was in Him ; and of walking as He walked, not only in many or in most respects, but in all things. And this was the light, wherein at this time I generally considered religion, as a uniform following of Christ, an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master. Nor was I afraid of anything more, than of bending this rule to the experience of myself, or of other men ; of allowing myself in any way the least disconformity to our grand Exemplar.'¹

In obedience to the summons he had received from Dr. Morley, Rector of Lincoln College, Wesley returned to Oxford to take pupils, eleven of whom were at once placed under his care. Here he found a nascent Methodist society, though as yet without

¹ *Works*, xi. 367.

the definite name, consisting of Charles and two companions, to whom he immediately joined himself, and by whom he was speedily recognized as their spiritual leader. Under his guidance the little community soon became the instrument of a spiritual propaganda, and gradually increased in number and influence—a little seed that afterwards was to become a great tree.

In his *Short History of Methodism*, published some years afterwards, Wesley gives the following account :—‘ In November, 1729, four young gentlemen of Oxford—Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College ; Mr. Charles Wesley, Student of Christ Church ; Mr. Morgan, Commoner of Christ Church ; and Mr. Kirkham, of Merton College—began to spend some evenings in a week together, in reading, chiefly the Greek Testament. The next year two or three of Mr. John Wesley’s pupils desired the liberty of meeting with them ; and afterwards one of Mr. Charles Wesley’s pupils. It was in 1732 that Mr. Ingham, of Queen’s College, and Mr. Broughton, of Exeter, were added to their number. To these in April was joined Mr. Clayton, of Brazen-nose, with two or three of his pupils. About the same time Mr. James Hervey was permitted to meet with them, and, in 1735, Mr. Whitefield.’ He says, ‘ They were all zealous members of the Church of England ; not only tenacious of all her doctrines, so far as they knew them, but of all her discipline, to the minutest circumstance. They were likewise zealous observers of all the University statutes, and that for conscience’ sake. But they observed neither these nor anything else further than they conceived it was bound upon

them by their one book, the Bible; it being their one desire and design to be downright Bible-Christians; taking the Bible, as interpreted by the primitive Church and our own, for their own and sole rule.'

This was the 'Holy Club,'¹ of which Wesley was by the wits dubbed the Curator. These were the 'Bible-bigots,' the 'Bible-moths' who, their deriders said, fed upon the Bible, as moths do upon cloth; and against whom were directed the gibes and jeers of the careless. But the opposition of the worldly spirits by whom they were surrounded did not hinder them in their high purpose, while it made more obvious their courage and singleness of aim. They did not confine their attention, each man, to his own soul, or generally to the welfare of the little community or club, but they sought to rescue other young students from evil courses, and to lead them to a religious life; they visited the prison and the castle, where they read prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, and administered the Sacrament once a month; they raised money, and procured books, medicines, and other requirements for poor prisoners; they visited and helped poor families, and they taught in schools and in the workhouse. In all this Wesley took the lead. He himself founded one of the schools, paid the mistress, and clothed some, if not all, of the children.²

¹ 'The men of wit in Christ Church called them Sacramentarians; their allies of Merton thought both this title and that of Methodists too decent, as implying something commendable; they therefore changed it, and honoured them with the title of the Holy Club.'—Moore, i. 169.

² Tyerman, i. 70.

When preaching on Dress many years after, he tells that, while he was at Oxford, 'in a cold winter's day, a young maid (one of those we kept at school) called upon me. I said, "You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown?" She said, "Sir, this is all I have." I put my hand in my pocket, but found I had scarce any money left, having just paid away what I had. It immediately struck me, will thy Master say, "Well done, good and faithful steward? Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold! O justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid?"' Thus he urged upon his hearers not to 'lay out on nothing, yea, worse than nothing, what may clothe your poor, naked, shivering fellow-creature.'¹ And on another occasion, when preaching on The More Excellent Way, he exhorts, 'First, if you have no family, after you have provided for yourself, give away all that remains. This, he says, was the practice of all the young men at Oxford who were called Methodists. For example, one of them [himself] had thirty pounds a year; he lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year, receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away thirty-two. The third year, he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received one hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived, as before, on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor ninety-two. Was not this a more excellent way?'²

Thus in works of benevolence and Christian

¹ *Works*, vii, 21

² *Ibid.*, vii, 36.

service, in the midst of abounding wickedness, these young men lived in purity of life, strengthening each other's faith and godly practice, living as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, in the midst of a truly crooked and perverse generation. But this outward zeal was not maintained without the most diligent religious exercises. The rigorous watchfulness which Wesley kept over himself at this time, and the strenuous efforts he made to promote his spiritual progress, are strikingly exhibited in *A Scheme of Self-Examination*, which he tells us was used by the first Methodists in Oxford, and which was undoubtedly his compilation. The document is extremely interesting, not only as showing the inner life of the little Methodist community, but, here particularly, as throwing light on the severe system of self-discipline which Wesley was accustomed to carry out, with the most rigorous precision, upon himself, and which he urged upon others.

A SCHEME OF SELF-EXAMINATION USED BY THE FIRST
METHODISTS IN OXFORD.

Sunday.—Love of God and Simplicity : Means of which are
Prayer and Meditation.

1. Have I been simple and recollected in everything I said or did? Have I (1) been simple in everything, that is, looked upon God, my Good, my Pattern, my one Desire, my Disposer, Parent of Good; acted wholly for Him; bounded my views with the present action or hour? (2) Recollected? that is, has this simple view been distinct and uninterrupted? Have I, in order to keep it so, used the signs agreed upon with my friends, wherever I was? Have I done anything without a previous perception of its being the will of God? or without a perception of its being an

exercise or a means of the virtue of the day? Have I said anything without it?

2. Have I prayed with fervour? at going in and out of church? in the church? morning and evening in private? Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, with my friends, at rising? before lying down? on Saturday noon? all the time I am engaged in exterior work in private? before I go into the place of public or private prayer, for help therein? Have I, wherever I was, gone to church morning and evening, unless for necessary mercy? and spent from one hour to three in private? Have I, in private prayer, frequently stopped short and observed what fervour? Have I repeated it over and over, till I adverted to every word? Have I at the beginning of every prayer or paragraph owned I cannot pray? Have I paused before I concluded in His name, and adverted to my Saviour now interceding for me at the right hand of God, and offering up these prayers?

3. Have I duly used ejaculations? that is, have I every hour prayed for humility, faith, hope, love, and the particular virtue of the day? considered with whom I was the last hour, what I did, and how? with regard to recollection, love of man, humility, self-denial, resignation, and thankfulness? considered the next hour in the same respects, offered up all I do to my Redeemer, begged his assistance in every particular, and commended my soul to His keeping? Have I done this deliberately, not in haste, seriously, not doing anything else the while, and fervently as I could?

4. Have I duly prayed for the virtue of the day? that is, have I prayed for it at going out and coming in? deliberately, seriously, fervently?

5. Have I used a Collect at nine, twelve, and three? and grace before and after eating? aloud at my own room? deliberately, seriously, fervently?

6. Have I duly meditated? every day, unless for necessary mercy, (1) From six, etc., to prayers? (2) From four to five? What was particular in the providence of this day? How ought the virtue of the day to have been

exerted upon it? How did it fall short? (Here faults.) (3) On Sunday, from six to seven, with Kempis? from three to four on redemption, or God's attributes? Wednesday and Friday, from twelve to one, on the Passion? after ending a book, on what I had marked in it?

Monday.—Love of Man.

1. Have I been zealous to do, and active in doing, good? that is, (1) Have I embraced every probable opportunity of doing good, and preventing, removing, or lessening evil? (2) Have I pursued it with my might? (3) Have I thought any thing too dear to part with, to serve my neighbour? (4) Have I spent an hour at least every day in speaking to some one or other? (5) Have I given any one up till he expressly renounced me? (6) Have I, before I spoke to any, learned, as far as I could, his temper, way of thinking, past life, and peculiar hindrances, internal and external? fixed the point to be aimed at? then the means to it? (7) Have I in speaking proposed the motives, then the difficulties, then balanced them, then exhorted him to consider both calmly and deeply, and to pray earnestly for help? (8) Have I in speaking to a stranger explained what religion is not? (not negative, not external) and what it is? (a recovery of the image of God) searched at what step in it he stops, and what makes him stop there? exhorted and directed him? (9) Have I persuaded all I could to attend public prayers, sermons, and sacraments, and, in general, to obey the laws of the Church Catholic, the Church of England, the State, the University, and their respective colleges? (10) Have I, when taxed with any act of disobedience, avowed it, and turned the attack with sweetness and firmness? (11) Have I disputed upon any practical point, unless it was to be practised just then? (12) Have I, in disputing, (i.) Desired him to define the terms of the question; to limit it; what he grants, what denies? (ii.) Delayed speaking my opinion? let him explain

and prove his? then insinuated and pressed objections? (13) Have I after every visit asked him who went with me, 'Did I say anything wrong?' (14) Have I, when any one asked advice, directed and exhorted him with all my power?

2. Have I rejoiced with and for my neighbour in virtue or pleasure? grieved with him in pain, for him in sin?

3. Have I received his infirmities with pity, not anger?

4. Have I thought or spoke unkindly of or to him? Have I revealed any evil of any one, unless it was necessary to some particular good I had in view? Have I then done it with all the tenderness of phrase and manner consistent with that end? Have I anyway appeared to approve them that did otherwise?

5. Has goodwill been, and appeared to be, the spring of all my actions towards others?

6. Have I duly used intercession? (1) Before, (2) After, speaking to any? (3) For my friends on Sunday? (4) For my pupils on Monday? (5) For those who have particularly desired it, on Wednesday and Friday? (6) For the family in which I am, every day?¹

A letter from one of Wesley's intimate fellow-collegians, Robert Kirkham, one of the first band of Oxford Methodists, throws a new light upon Wesley's sentiments at this time. Wesley had already visited Kirkham at his home in Stanton, Gloucestershire, and had been received as a welcome guest. Here he had made the acquaintance of Kirkham's sister Betty, and seems to have been impressed by her charms; nor was she indifferent to the personal attractions of Wesley. This did not escape the notice of her brother. Writing to Wesley, Kirkham says:—

¹ *Works*, vii. 514-16.

‘February 2, 1727.’¹

‘Your most deserving, queer character, your worthy personal accomplishments, your noble endowments of mind, your little and handsome person, and your obliging and desirable conversation, have been the pleasing subject of our discourse for some pleasant hours. You have often been in the thoughts of M. B. [Miss Betty], which I have curiously observed, when with her alone, by inward smiles and sighs and abrupt expressions concerning *you*. Shall this suffice? I caught her this morning in an humble and devout posture on her knees. . . . I long for the time when you are to supply my father’s absence. Keep your counsel and burn this when perused. You shall have my reasons in my next. I must conclude, and subscribe myself, your most affectionate friend, and *brother* I wish I might write,

‘ROBERT KIRKHAM.’

Wesley’s sister Martha seems to have been aware of his tender sentiments, for, in a letter of near the same date, she says, ‘When I knew that you were just returned from Worcestershire, where I suppose you saw your *Varanese* [a fictitious and fancy name for Miss Kirkham, used according to a custom of the time], I then ceased to wonder at your silence, for the sight of such a woman, “so known, so loved,” might well make you forget me. I really have myself a vast respect for her, as I must necessarily have for one that is so dear to you.’

A subsequent correspondence, with Mrs. Pendarves, shows that Wesley then retained his passion for Varanese, and that it was not his fault that it did not lead to a life-long union. For more than three years Wesley kept up a correspondence with Miss

¹ Tyerman gives 1727 in his *Life of Wesley*, but 1726 in *The Oxford Methodists*. In one case the date is according to N.S., in the other O.S.

Betty Kirkham, and spoke of her in the tenderest terms; but in 1731 their friendship was interrupted, whether by her father's interference, or by her own preference for another, is not determined. It seems probable that she married a Mr. Wilson, and died in the year 1732.¹

Wesley's intimacy with Miss Betty Kirkham led to his acquaintance with her sister's friend, Mrs. Pendarves, the elder daughter of Bernard Granville, and niece of Lord Lansdowne. She had married early—at the age of seventeen—and was left a widow when she was twenty-three. She was opulent, talented, accomplished, beautiful, a brilliant lady of the Court, familiar with all that rank and fashion could display; yet is said to have been sweet and modest, intelligent and inquiring; as happy in country life as if she had never known a Court or shone in the assemblies of London; as if the assembly and the opera were altogether strange to her; and, above all, she was interested and concerned about matters of religious devotion and duty. It is no wonder if the young collegian, with a mind open to every charm of refinement and goodness, as well as to every grace of person, was altogether dazzled and subdued.²

Wesley and Mrs. Pendarves corresponded freely; he under the pseudonym of *Cyrus*, she of *Aspasia*. Several of the letters are given in *Lady Llanover's Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*. Dr. Rigg, who had had the opportunity of examining the whole of the correspondence, says, 'In all other

¹ Tyerman, *Oxford Methodists*, p. 2.

² Rigg, *The Living Wesley*, p. 59.

correspondence, before as well as after this period of his life, Wesley is always clear, neat, and parsimonious of words; simple, chaste, and unaffected. In this correspondence, on the contrary, he is stilted, sentimental, I had almost said affected, certainly unreal, and at times fulsome, when he has to speak of the lady herself, or attempts to turn a compliment. One almost wonders how the lady, who never forgets herself, and whose style is always natural and proper, was able to bear the style in which he addressed her. It is only when a question of religious casuistry, or of theology, or of duty, or of devotion, is to be dealt with, that Wesley is himself again; then his style is singularly in contrast with what it is in respect to points of personality or of sentiment. His expressions of regard and admiration are as high-flown as if they belonged to a Spanish romance; his discussions are clear and close. It is hard to understand how the same man could be the writer of all these letters.' ¹

This correspondence appears to have been continued up to August, 1731, when Mrs. Pendarves went to reside in Ireland; and though it is probable Wesley wrote to her more than once after that time, yet she did not write to him until, after an interval of three years, she had returned to England. Then it was too late. During those years Wesley had advanced greatly in character and in serious devotion

¹ *Living Wesley*, p. 50. Long afterwards, Wesley wrote, referring to the plainness of his style, 'I *could* even now write as floridly as even the admired Dr. B[laire]; but I dare not. . . . I dare no more write in a fine style than wear a fine coat. . . . Let who will admire the French frippery, I am still for plain, sound English.'—Preface to second four volumes of Sermons.

to the lofty aims of his calling, and had gained a higher and a wider influence as a spiritual leader and guide. Dr. Rigg pertinently remarks, that, 'in addition to the curious interest of this correspondence, it reveals a background of natural character which enables us to see in a much truer light the matured, and in good part transformed, Wesley of later years. It reveals to us the extreme natural susceptibility of Wesley to whatever was graceful and amiable in woman, especially if united to mental vigour and moral excellence. . . . He was naturally a woman-worshipper—at least a worshipper of such women. An almost reverent courtesy, a warm but pure affection, a delicate but close familiarity, marked through life his relations with the good and gifted women—gifted they were for the most part—with whom he maintained friendship and correspondence.'

But, with Wesley's future life in view, this episode affords ground for reflecting on the wonderful controlling providence which then, and not then only, prevented a life destined for heroic self-denial, and for almost unequalled labour in the service of the Church and the race, from contenting itself with the limitations of the ordinary, even though in his case the distinguished, career of the parish clergyman or the college don.

Returning to our history, we find that, at the beginning of the year 1730, Wesley accepted for some months a curacy eight miles from Oxford, probably at Stanton Harcourt, where his friend Gambold was afterwards the incumbent. It was not far from South Leigh, where Wesley had preached his first sermon. Thither he rode on Sundays, but what other service

he rendered is not known. He received payment at the rate of £30 per year. This curacy afforded him a new field of usefulness, and enabled him to retain his horse without abridging his charities.

In the spring of the following year he began to observe the Wednesday and Friday fasts, after the practice of the early Church, tasting no food till three in the afternoon. He tells us that he strove diligently against all sin ; omitted no sort of self-denial that he thought lawful ; carefully using, both in public and in private, all the means of grace at all opportunities. He omitted no occasion of doing good, and for that reason, he says, he suffered evil. But, knowing all this to be nothing, unless it was directed toward inward holiness, he aimed continually at attaining the image of God, by doing God's will and not his own.¹

At this time he and his brother began the practice of conversing in Latin when they were alone ; a practice they continued through life. In the spring of this year they paid a visit to Epworth, remaining there three weeks. They walked there and back, discovering that four or five and twenty miles is an easy and safe day's journey in hot weather, as well as cold ; and that it was easy to read as they walked, for a distance of ten or a dozen miles, without feeling either faint or weary ; and on their return Wesley tells his mother that the motion and sun together, in their last hundred and fifty miles' walk, so thoroughly carried off all their 'superfluous humours' that they continued in perfect health, though the season in Oxford was a very sickly one ; and, as many thought

¹ *Works*, i. 99.

he and his brother were too strict, and laid burdens on themselves which they were not able to bear, he begs that, if she judged them to be too superstitious or enthusiastic on the one hand, or too remiss on the other, she would inform them as speedily as possible. And, writing to his father at the same time, he says, 'Since our return our little company that used to meet us on a Sunday morning is shrunk into almost none at all. Mr. Morgan is sick at Holt ; Mr. Boyce is at his father's at Barton ; Mr. Kirkham must shortly leave Oxford ; and a young gentleman who used to make a fourth, either afraid or ashamed, or both, is returned to the ways of the world, and studiously shuns our company.' But though he narrates the fact, he uses no word signifying any discouragement on his part. Indeed, such a sentiment, so entirely unheard in after life, when there was so much to occasion it, seems not to find place even at this early period. 'However,' he adds, 'the poor at the castle had the Gospel preached to them, and some of their wants supplied, and the children were still cared for.'

Amongst the interesting letters written by him to his ever-wise counsellor, his mother, is one bearing date February 28, 1732. She had said, 'I own I never understood by the *real presence* more than that the Divine nature of Christ is then eminently present to impart, by the operation of His Spirit, the benefit of His death to worthy receivers.' He replied, 'One consideration is enough to make me assent to your judgment concerning the Holy Sacrament, which is, that we cannot allow Christ's human nature to be present in it, without allowing either CON- or TRANS-substantiation. But that His divinity is so

united to us then, as He never is but to worthy receivers, I firmly believe, though the manner of that union is utterly a mystery to me.' Speaking of his many spiritual privileges, he asks, 'What shall I do to make all these blessings effectual, to gain from them that mind which was also in Christ Jesus? To all who give signs of their not being strangers to it, I propose this question—and why not to you rather than any? Shall I quite break off my pursuit of all learning, but what immediately tends to practice? I once desired to make a fair show in languages and philosophy; but it is past. There is a more excellent way, and if I cannot attain to any progress in the one, without throwing up all thoughts of the other, why, fare it well! Yet a little while, and we shall all be equal in knowledge, if we are in virtue. You say you "have renounced the world." And what have I been doing all this time? What have I done ever since I was born? Why, I have been plunging myself into it more and more. It is enough; "Awake, thou that sleepest." Is there not "one Lord, one Spirit, one hope of our calling"? One way of obtaining that hope? Then I am to renounce the world as well as you. This is the very thing I want to do—to draw off my affections from this world, and fix them on a better. But how? What is the surest and the shortest way? Is it not to be humble? Surely this is a large step in the way. But the question recurs, How am I to do this? To own the necessity of it is not to be humble. In many things you have interceded for me and prevailed. Who knows but in this too you may be successful!' ¹

¹ *Works*, xii. 13.

These words show with what eagerness he was striving after holiness ; they exhibit his docile and teachable spirit ; and they indicate the kind of self-discipline to which he was bending himself—a discipline carried on within the quiet enclosure of University life, that so well helped to prepare him for the outward struggles yet to come.

Being in London in the July of this year, Wesley made the acquaintance of William Law,—who was then living with Gibbons at Putney,—and began to read the mystic writers.¹ This, as we shall see, ultimately added another element to his complex experience, involving fresh perplexities to be resolved, and fresh conflicts to be endured. On November 23, 1736, he wrote to Samuel Wesley, ‘ I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the mystics ; under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace.’ He also became known to many members of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, with whose aims he most entirely sympathized. He was admitted to the Society on August 3 of this year.

On August 26, Mr. Morgan died. He was one of the three who were the first to be dubbed *Supererogation men* and *Methodists*. As false reports were spread abroad that his death had been occasioned by the excessive fasting and other austerities which the Wesleys had induced him to practise, Wesley wrote a long letter to Morgan’s father, giving some account of his son’s Christian character and charitable works, and of the general proceedings of their little company.

¹ Moore, i. 190.

This so far satisfied Mr. Morgan that he subsequently placed his younger son as a pupil under the care of Charles Wesley. In the preface to his published Journals, Wesley inserted this letter as 'a plain account of the rise of that little society which had been so variously represented.'

During the course of this summer Wesley made two journeys to Epworth. In the first, while he was standing on the garden wall at a friend's house, it fell flat under him, but he escaped unhurt. His second journey was an affecting one. As his father was growing old and infirm, and his brother Samuel was about to reside in Tiverton, it was not probable that all the family¹ would ever gather together again within the walls of that old parsonage at Epworth—the home of the gifted and honoured family whose name was to become familiar to English-speaking races in every corner of the habitable globe; the home to which the thoughts of so many in after generations would turn, and to which the steps of so many pilgrims from this land and from over the seas would wander.

On the first day of this year, 1733, Wesley preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University, on 'The Circumcision of the Heart,' from Rom. ii. 29. Writing to a friend thirty years after, he says, 'The sermon contains all that I now teach concerning salvation for all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart.' But on one topic it did not teach all that he afterwards taught. On the subject of faith it lacked the teaching that Wesley at that time himself lacked. He defines faith to be 'an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture, and in particular to

¹ Whitehead's words imply that all the family were present.

those important truths, *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; He bare our sins in His own body on the tree; He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*' But when he afterwards published the sermon, in 1748, in the second of his first four volumes of sermons, he added the following remarkable passage: ('not only an unshaken assent,' etc.) 'but likewise the revelation of Christ in our hearts; a divine evidence or conviction of His love, His free, unmerited love to me a sinner; a sure confidence in His pardoning mercy, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost; a confidence whereby every true believer is enabled to bear witness. *I know that my Redeemer liveth; that I have an Advocate with the Father, and that Jesus Christ the righteous is my Lord, and the propitiation for MY sins. I know He hath loved ME. He hath reconciled me, even me to God; and I have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*' It will presently be seen how closely similar these words are to those used by him, as he recorded his faith after the memorable meeting in Aldersgate Street, at which he first grasped the truth of his personal and individual interest in Christ's atonement; that event being the dividing line between, 'He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world' and 'He is the propitiation for my sins.'

This year was signalized by his printing ('the first time I ventured to print anything') *A Collection of Forms of Prayer*,¹ designed for the use of his

¹ The recent discovery of a manuscript catalogue of the library of the Rev. John Clayton makes it probable that the volume of prayers named above was the joint production of Wesley and his friend

pupils. Thus began that prolific literary labour which was continued to the end of his days, and which none of his toils abated. The number and variety of his publications astonishes every student of his life.

His father being in a bad state of health and apparently declining rapidly, Wesley repaired to Epworth. Passing over the bridge at Daventry, his horse fell over it with him; but he escaped unhurt, and, as so often afterwards, found occasion for thankfulness to God because of preservation in imminent danger. His parents were very anxious that he should be settled at Epworth in case of his father's death. After his return to Oxford he wrote to his mother, 'You observed when I was with you, that I was very indifferent as to the having or not having the living of Epworth. I was indeed utterly unable to determine either way; and that for this reason: I know, if I could stand my ground here, and approve myself a faithful minister of our blessed Jesus, by honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report; then there would not be a place under the heaven like this for improvement in every good.' And again, 'I have as many pupils as I need, and as many friends; when more are better for me, I shall have more. If I have no more pupils after these are gone from me, I shall then be glad of a curacy near you; if I have, I shall take it as a signal that I am to remain here.'¹

In May he again set out for Epworth, calling at

Clayton.—See *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. iii. p. 202.

¹ Moore, i. 203.

Manchester upon his friend Clayton, who had now left the University. On his return to Oxford he saw the bad effects of his absence upon his pupils and the members of their little society. He now found himself surrounded by enemies, triumphing over him, while friends were deserting him; and he saw the fruits of his labours in danger of being blasted before they had reached maturity. But he stood firm as a rock, and being conscious of his own integrity, and that he had nothing in view but to serve God and benefit his neighbours, he viewed his situation with calmness, and in the simplicity of his heart wrote thus to his father :—

‘June 13, 1733.

‘The effects of my last journey, I believe, will make me more cautious of staying any time from Oxford for the future; at least till I have no pupils to take care of, which probably will be within a year or two. One of my young gentlemen told me at my return, that he was more and more afraid of singularity; another, that he had read an excellent piece of Mr. Locke’s, which had convinced him of the mischief of regarding authority. Both of them agreed, that the observing of Wednesday as a fast was an unnecessary singularity; the Catholic Church (that is, the majority of it) having long since repealed, by contrary custom, the injunction she formerly gave concerning it. A third, who could not yield to this argument, has been convinced by a fever, and Dr. Frewin. Our seven and twenty communicants at St. Mary’s were on Monday shrunk to five; and, the day before, the last of Mr. Clayton’s pupils who continued with us, informed me, that he did not design to meet us any more.

‘My ill success, as they call it, seems to be what has frightened every one away from a falling house.’

He now redoubled his diligence with his pupils, that they might recover the ground they had lost. He had been blamed both by friends and enemies for his singularity, and for some particular practices which he observed. Writing to his mother on these matters, he reveals his thoughts and methods. He says, August 17, 1733, 'The thing that gives offence here is the being singular with regard to time, expense, and company. This is evident beyond exception, from the case of Mr. Smith, one of our Fellows, who no sooner began to husband his time, to retrench unnecessary expenses, and to avoid his irreligious acquaintance, but he was set upon, by not only all those acquaintance, but many others too, as if he had entered into a conspiracy to cut all their throats; though to this day he has not advised any single person, unless in a word or two and by accident, to act as he did in any of these instances.' He adds:

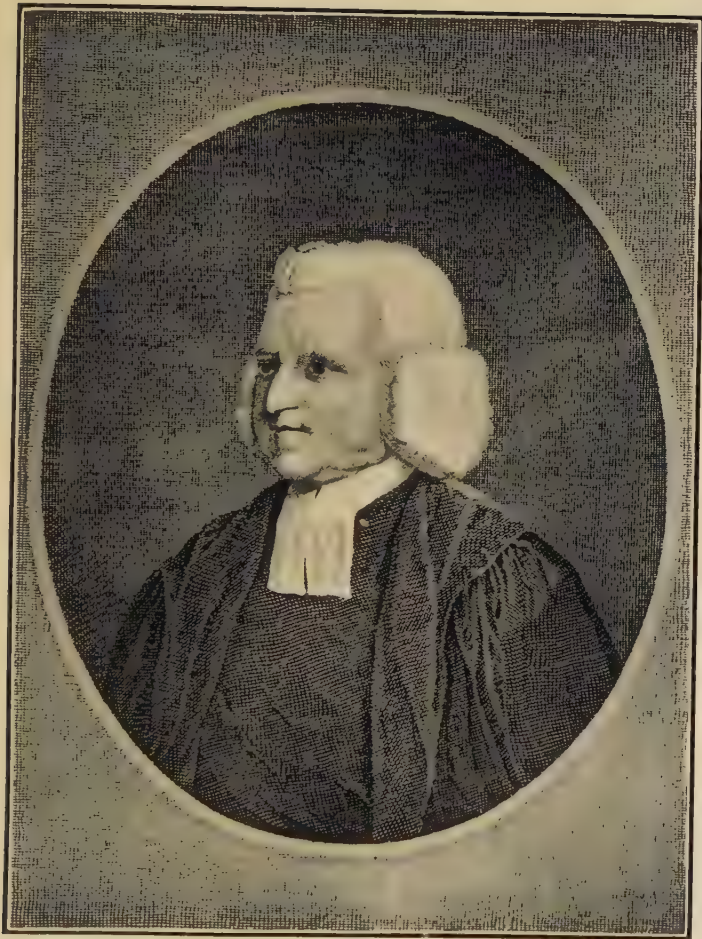
'It is true indeed, that "the devil hates offensive war most;" and that whoever tries to rescue more than his own soul from his hands will have more enemies, and meet with greater opposition, than if he was content with "having his own life for a prey." That I try to do this is likewise certain; but I cannot say whether I "rigorously impose any observances on others," till I know what that phrase means. What I do is this: When I am entrusted with a person who is first to understand and practise, and then to teach, the law of Christ, I endeavour, by an intermixture of reading and conversation, to show him what that law is; that is, to renounce all inordinate love of the world, and to love and obey God with all his strength. When he appears seriously sensible of this, I propose to him the means God hath commanded him to use, in order to that end; and a week, or a month, or a year after, as the state of his soul seems

to require it, the several prudential means recommended by wise and good men. As to the times, order, measure, and manner wherein these are to be proposed, I depend upon the Holy Spirit to direct me, in and by my own experience and reflection, joined to the advices of my religious friends here and elsewhere. Only two rules it is my principle to observe in all cases: First, to begin, continue, and end all my advices in the spirit of meekness; as knowing that "the wrath," or severity, "of man worketh not the righteousness of God;" and, secondly, to add to meekness, long-suffering; in pursuance of a rule which I fixed long since—never to give up any one till I have tried him, at least, ten years:—How long hath God had pity on thee?'

Truly Wesley was preparing himself to be a great leader of men.

Tyerman observes, 'Methodism at Oxford was organized in 1729. Two years after, while Wesley and his brother were at Epworth, it dwindled into almost nothing; and two years later still, when it had increased to seven and twenty communicants, during another brief Epworth visit it was almost utterly destroyed, for the seven and twenty were reduced to five. All this goes to show that Wesley was the soul of this movement, and that without him it would have been dissolved and become extinct. . . . The five poor Methodists remaining, not reckoning Wesley himself, were doubtless Charles Wesley, Benjamin Ingham, James Hervey, John Gambold, and, probably, Charles Kinchin. All honour to such names! They kept the fire burning when it was in danger of going out. Wesley was their master-spirit; but they were faithful and willing co-workers.'¹

¹ *Life of Wesley*, i. 93.



REV. CHARLES WESLEY.

(1708-1788)

From an Engraving by J. Fidler.

A more exact picture of Wesley and his methods, and of the little band of Methodists at this time, than that furnished in a letter of Gambold's, one of themselves, cannot be given. It is too precise and exact in its details to be omitted, notwithstanding its length. Gambold writes :

‘ Mr. Wesley, late of Lincoln College, has been the instrument of so much good to me, that I shall never forget him. Could I remember him as I ought, it would have very near the same effect as if he was still present ; for a conversation so unreserved as was his, so zealous in engaging his friends to every instance of Christian piety, has left nothing to be said, but what occurs to us as often as we are disposed to remember him impartially.

‘ About the middle of March, 1730, I became acquainted with Mr. Charles Wesley of Christ Church. I was just then come up from the country, and had made a resolution, to find out some pious persons of religion to keep company with, or else to instil something of it into those I knew already. I had been for two years before in deep melancholy ; so God was pleased to order it, to disappoint and break a proud spirit, and to embitter the world to me ; as I was inclining to relish its vanities. During this time I had no friend to whom I could open my mind, to any purpose. No man did care for my soul ; or none, at least, understood its paths. They that were at ease could not guess what my sorrow was for. The learned endeavoured to give me right notions, and the friendly to divert me. But I had a weight upon my heart, which only prayer could in some degree remove. I prepared myself to make trial of the value and comfort of society, being a little recovered. One day an old acquaintance entertained me with some reflections on the whimsical Mr. Wesley, his preciseness and pious extravagances. Though I had lived with him four years in the same college, yet so unable was I to take notice of

anything that passed, that I knew nothing of his character ; but upon hearing this, I suspected he might be a good Christian. I therefore went to his room, and, without any ceremony, desired the benefit of his conversation. I had so large a share of it henceforth, that hardly a day passed, while I was at college, but we were together once, if not oftener.

‘ After some time he introduced me to his brother John, of Lincoln College. “ For,” said he, “ he is somewhat older than I, and can resolve your doubts better.” This, as I found afterwards, was a thing which he was deeply sensible of ; for I never observed any person have a more real deference for another, than he constantly had for his brother. Indeed, he followed his brother entirely. Could I describe one of them, I should describe both. And therefore I shall say no more of Charles, but that he was a man made for friendship ; who, by his cheerfulness and vivacity, would refresh his friend’s heart ; with attentive consideration, would enter into and settle all his concerns ; so far as he was able, would do anything for him great or small ; and by a habit of openness and freedom, leave no room for misunderstanding.

‘ The Wesleys were already talked of for some religious practices, which were first occasioned by Mr. Morgan, of Christ Church. From these combined friends began a little society ; for several others, from time to time, fell in ; most of them only to be improved by their serious and useful discourse ; and some few espousing all their resolutions and their whole way of life.

‘ Mr. John Wesley was always the chief manager, for which he was very fit ; for he not only had more learning and experience than the rest, but he was blest with such activity as to be always gaining ground, and such steadiness that he lost none. What proposals he made to any were sure to charm them, because he was so much in earnest ; nor could they afterwards slight them, because they saw him always the same. What supported this uniform vigour was the care he took to consider well of every affair before he engaged in it, making all his decisions in the fear of God,

without passion, humour, or self-confidence ; for though he had naturally a very clear apprehension, yet his exact prudence depended more on humanity and singleness of heart. To this I may add, that he had, I think, something of authority in his countenance ; though, as he did not want address, he could soften his manner, and point as occasion required. Yet he never assumed anything to himself above his companions. Any of them might speak their mind, and their words were as strictly regarded by him as his were by them.

‘ It was their custom to meet most evenings, either at his chamber or one of the others, where, after some prayers (the chief subject of which was charity), they ate their supper and he read some book. But the chief business was to review what each had done that day, in pursuance of their common design, and to consult what steps were to be taken the next.

‘ Their undertaking included these several particulars : To converse with young students ; to visit the prisons ; to instruct some poor families ; and to take care of a school and a parish workhouse.

‘ They took great pains with the younger members of the University, to rescue them from bad company, and encourage them in a sober, studious life. If they had some interest with any such, they would get them to breakfast, and, over a dish of tea, endeavour to fasten some good hint upon them. They would bring them acquainted with other well-disposed young men. They would help them in those parts of learning which they stuck at. They would close with their best sentiments, drive on their convictions, give them rules of piety, when they would receive them, and watch over them with great tenderness.

‘ Some or other of them went to the castle every day ; and another most commonly to Bocardo. Whoever came to the castle was to read in the chapel to as many prisoners as would attend, and to talk to the man or men whom he had taken particularly in charge. Before reading, he asked, Whether they had prayers yesterday ? (For some serious

men among the prisoners read family prayers with the rest.) Whether they had read over again what was read last, and what they remembered of it? Then he went over the heads of it to them; and afterwards went on in the same book for a quarter of an hour. The books they used were the *Christian Monitor*, the *Country Parson's Advice to his Parishioners*, and such like. When he had done, he summed up the several particulars that had been insisted on, enforced the advice given, and reduced it at least to two or three sentences, which they might easily remember. Then he took his man aside, and asked him, Whether he was in the chapel yesterday? and other questions concerning his care to serve God, and learn his duty.

‘When a new prisoner came, their conversation with him, for four or five times, was particularly close and searching. Whether he bore no malice towards those that did prosecute him, or any others? The first time, after professions of goodwill, they only inquired of his circumstances in the world. Such questions imported friendship, and engaged the man to open his heart. Afterwards they entered upon such inquiries as most concern a prisoner. Whether he submitted to the disposal of Providence? Whether he repented his past life? Last of all, they asked him, Whether he constantly used private prayer, and whether he had ever been communicated. Thus, most or all of the prisoners were spoken to in their turns. But, if any one was either under sentence of death, or appeared to have some intentions of a new life, they came every day to his assistance; and partook in the conflict and suspense of those who now should be found able, or not able, to lay hold on salvation. In order to release those who were confined for small debts, and were bettered by their affliction, and likewise to purchase books, physic, and other necessities, they raised a small fund, to which many of their acquaintance contributed quarterly. They had prayers at the castle most Wednesdays and Fridays, a sermon on Sundays, and the Sacrament once a month.

‘When they undertook any poor family, they saw them, at least, once a week; sometimes gave them money; admonished them of their vices; read to them, and examined their children. The school was, I think, of Mr. Wesley’s own setting up. At all events, he paid the mistress, and clothed some, if not all of the children. When they went thither, they inquired how each child behaved; saw their work (for some could knit and spin); heard them read; heard them their prayers and Catechism, and explained part of it. In the same manner they taught the children in the workhouse, and read to the old people as they did to the prisoners.

‘Though some practices of Mr. Wesley and his friends were much blamed—as their fasting on Wednesday and Friday, after the custom of the primitive Church; their coming on those Sundays, when there was no Sacrament in their own colleges, to receive it at Christ Church—yet nothing was so much disliked as these charitable employments. They seldom took any notice of the accusations brought against them; but if they made any reply, it was commonly such a plain and simple one, as if there was nothing more in the case, but that they had heard such doctrines of their Saviour, and believed and done accordingly. “Shall we be more happy in another life, the more virtuous we are in this? Are we the more virtuous the more intensely we love God and man? Is love, as all habits, the more intent, the more we exercise it? Is either helping, or trying to help, man, for God’s sake, an exercise of love to God or man? Particularly, is the feeding the hungry, the giving drink to the thirsty, the clothing the naked, the visiting sick persons or prisoners, an exercise of love to God or man? Is the endeavouring to teach the ignorant, to admonish sinners, to encourage the good, to comfort the afflicted, to confirm the wavering, and to reconcile enemies, the exercise of love to God or man? Shall we be the more happy in another life, if we do the former of these things, and try to do the latter? Or if we do not the one, nor try to do the other.”’

This is a minute delineation of the proceedings of the Holy Club, written in great simplicity by one of themselves. It will be seen how prominent a part Wesley took in all. It is indicative of his attention to minute details, and exhibits the influence of his orderly, logical, and earnest mind. In the remainder of Gambold's narrative, for such it is, Wesley is more directly spoken of, and we are better enabled to imagine him in the pursuit of his work. Gambold goes on to say :

‘What I would chiefly remark upon is the manner in which Mr. Wesley directed his friends. Because he required such a regulation of our studies, as might devote them all to God, he has been cried out upon as one that discouraged learning. Far from that; the first thing he struck at in young men was that indolence which would not submit to close thinking. Nor was he against reading much, especially at first; because then the mind ought to fill itself with materials, and try everything that looks bright and perfect.

‘He earnestly recommended to them a method and order in all their actions. After their morning devotions (which were at a fixed and early hour, from five to six being the time, morning as well as evening), he advised them to determine with themselves what they were to do all the parts of the day. By such foresight, they would, at every hour's end, not be in doubt how to dispose of themselves; and, by bringing themselves under the necessity of such a plan, they might correct the impotence of a mind that had been used to live by humour and chance, and prepare it by degrees to bear the other restraints of a holy life.

‘The next thing was to put them upon keeping the fasts, visiting poor people, and coming to the weekly Sacrament; not only to subdue the body, increase charity, and obtain Divine grace, but (as he expressed it) to cut off their retreat

to the world. He judged that, if they did these things, men would cast out their name as evil, and, by the impossibility of keeping fair any longer with the world, oblige them to take their whole refuge in Christianity. But those, whose resolutions he thought would not bear this test, he left to gather strength by their secret exercises.

‘ It was his earnest care to introduce them to the treasures of wisdom and hope in the Holy Scriptures; to teach them not only to endure that book, but to form themselves by it, and to fly to it as the great antidote against the darkness of this world. For some years past, he and his friends read the New Testament together at evening. After every portion of it, having heard the conjectures the rest had to offer, he made his observations on the phrase, design, and difficult places. One or two wrote these down from his mouth.

‘ He laid much stress upon self-examination. He taught them (besides what occurs in his Collection of Prayers) to take account of their actions in a very exact manner, by writing a constant diary. In this, they noted down in cipher, once if not oftener in the day, what chiefly their employments had been in the several parts of it, and how they had performed each. Mr. Wesley had these records of his life by him for many years past. And some I have known, who, to seal their convictions and make their repentance more solemn, would write down such reflections upon themselves as the anguish of their soul at that time suggested, adding any spiritual maxim which some experience of their own had confirmed to them.

‘ Then, to keep in their minds an awful sense of God’s presence, with a constant dependence on His help, he advised them to ejaculatory prayers. They had a book of ejaculations relating to the chief virtues, and, lying by them as they stood at their studies, they at intervals snatched a short petition out of it. But at last, instead of that variety, they contented themselves with the following aspirations (containing acts of faith, hope, love, and self-resignation

at the end of every hour)—“Consider and hear me,” etc.’¹

Although the so-called ‘Methodists’ were by their practices distinguished from the rest of the University, it does not appear that they had formed themselves into a definite ‘Religious Society.’ That Wesley contemplated their doing so seems probable from a letter addressed to him by his friend Clayton, who was now resident in Manchester. Clayton says, ‘I was at Mr. Deacon’s when your letter came to hand, and we had a deal of talk about your scheme of avowing yourselves as a society, and fixing upon a set of rules. The Doctor seemed to think you had better let it alone; for to what end would it serve? It would be no additional tie upon yourselves; and perhaps would be a snare for the consciences of those weak brethren who might chance to come among you. Observing the stations [the fast on Wednesdays and Fridays], and weekly communion, are duties which stand upon a much higher footing than a rule of a society; and they who can set aside the command of God and the authority of the Church will hardly, I doubt, be tied by the rules of a private society.’²

On June 11, 1734, Wesley again preached before the University, and for his sermon—‘his Jacobite sermon’—was ‘much mauled and threatened more.’ But he was wise enough to get the Vice-Chancellor to read and approve it before he preached it, and might

¹ Quoted by Tyerman in his interesting work, *The Oxford Methodists*, pp. 157-162.

² Quoted by Tyerman in *The Oxford Methodists*, in which much information respecting the little company is given. Just so much is quoted here as tends to throw Wesley into relief.

therefore bid Wadham, Merton, Exeter, and Christ Church do their worst. This is all that is known of this sermon. But there is a sermon, prepared about this time by Wesley for the use of his pupils, and published by him fifty-five years after, the sentiments of which he says he had not in all that time had occasion to alter. The sermon is on the duty of constant communion. It illustrates alike his views on the subject, and the extreme carefulness with which he sought to guide his pupils.¹

Wesley's frequent journeys, often on foot as well as on horseback, and the great and constant labour of preaching, reading, visiting, etc., wherever he was, with hard study and a very abstemious diet, had now greatly affected his health. His strength was much reduced, and he had frequent attacks of spitting of blood. In the night of July 16 he had a return of it in such quantity as to awake him out of sleep. The sudden and unexpected manner of its coming on, with the solemnity of the night season, made eternity seem near. He cried to God, 'O, prepare me for Thy coming, and come when Thou wilt!' His friends began to be alarmed for his safety, and his mother wrote two or three letters, blaming him for the general neglect of his health. He sought and took the advice of a physician; and by proper care, and a prudent management of his daily exercise, gradually recovered his strength.²

In the autumn of this year (September 21, Moore says) he began the practice of reading on horseback, which he continued for nearly forty years. 'Near

¹ *Works*, vii. 147.

² Moore, i. 208: he quotes from Wesley's private diary.

thirty years ago,' he wrote, in March, 1770, 'I was thinking, "How is it that no horse ever stumbles while I am reading?" History, poetry, and philosophy I commonly read on horseback (having other employment at other times). No account can possibly be given but this: Because then I throw the reins on his neck. I then set myself to observe; and I aver, that in riding above an hundred thousand miles, I scarce ever remember any horse (except two, that would fall head over heels any way) to fall, or to make a considerable stumble, while I rode *with a slack rein*. To fancy therefore that a *tight rein* prevents stumbling is a capital blunder. I have repeated the trial more frequently than most men in the kingdom can do. A slack rein will prevent stumbling if anything will. But in some horses nothing can.'¹

The health of the veteran Rector of Epworth was now rapidly failing. Apprehending the near approach of his end, and desiring that the living of Epworth should remain in the family, he wrote to his son, urging him to seek the next presentation, and thereby secure the old home for his mother and sisters. His brother Samuel urged the same upon him. Wesley wrote at considerable length to his father, giving his reasons, under twenty-six heads, in favour of his remaining in Oxford, and against his removing to Epworth. His brother Samuel continued to debate the point with him. John's main contention was, 'The question is not whether I could do more good to others *there* or *here*, but whether I could do more to myself; seeing wherever I can be most holy

¹ *Journal*, March, 1770.

myself, there I am assured I can most promote holiness in others ; but I am equally assured there is no place under heaven so fit for my improvement as Oxford.' Samuel sought to fix him to his obligation. 'You are not at liberty to resolve against undertaking a cure of souls. You are solemnly engaged to do it before God and His high priest, and His Church. Are you not ordained? Did you not deliberately and openly promise to instruct, to teach, to admonish, to exhort those committed to your charge? Did you equivocate then with so vile a reservation, as to purpose in your heart that you would never have any so committed? It is not a college; it is not a university; it is the *order of the Church*, according to which you were called.' John replied, 'I do not nor ever did resolve against taking a cure of souls. There are four cures belonging to our college, and consistent with a Fellowship: I do not know but I may take one of them at Michaelmas. Not that I am clearly assured that I should be false to my engagement, were I only to instruct and exhort the pupils committed to my charge.' Samuel says, 'You can leave Oxford when you will. Not surely to such advantage. You have a probability of doing good there. Will that good be wholly undone if you leave it? Why should you not leaven another lump?' And again he urges, '*The order of the Church* stakes you down, and the more you struggle will hold the faster. If there be such a thing as truth, I insist upon it you must, when opportunity offers, either perform that promise, or repent of it.' To this John retorts, 'Another can supply my place at Epworth better than at Oxford, and the good

done here is of a far more diffusive nature. It is a more extensive benefit to sweeten the fountain, than to do the same to particular streams. God may suffer Epworth to be worse than before. But *I may not* attempt to prevent it, with so great hazard to my own soul. Your last argument is either *ignoratio elenchi*, or implies these two propositions. 1st, "You resolve against any parochial cure of souls." 2nd, "The priest who does not undertake the first parochial cure that offers, is perjured." Let us add a third, "The tutor, who being in Orders, never accepts of a parish, is perjured." And then I deny all three.¹

John now desired to close the discussion, and being doubtful only on one point raised by his brother—whether at his ordination he had engaged to undertake the cure of souls—and recognizing that 'the true sense of the words of an oath, and the mode and extent of its obligation, are not to be determined by him who takes it, but by him who requires it,' he referred the question to Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford, by whom he was ordained. The reply is, 'It doth not seem to me, that at your ordination you engaged yourself to undertake the cure of any parish, provided you can, as a clergyman, better serve God and His Church in your present or some other station.'² Within two months of the date of this letter, Wesley by some means was led to set aside all his strong reasons for continuing in Oxford, and, yielding to the desire of the family, made application for the living at Epworth. But the effort proved unsuccessful; it was already promised to another.

¹ *Letters relating to Rev. John Wesley*, p. 45. By Dr. Priestley.

² Moore, i. 231.

On April 25, 1735, the aged Rector passed peacefully to his rest in the presence of his loving wife, his two sons, John and Charles, and other members of the family. Charles, writing to his brother Samuel, says, 'You have reason to envy us, who could attend him in the last stage of his illness. The few words he could utter I saved, and hope never to forget. Some of them were, "Nothing too much to suffer for heaven. The weaker I am in the body, the stronger and more sensible support I feel from God. To-morrow I will see you all with me around this table, that we may once more drink of the cup of blessing before we drink it new in the kingdom of God." . . . He often laid his hand upon my head and said, "Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not." To my sister Emily he said, "Do not be concerned at my death; God will then begin to manifest himself to my family. . . . Oh, Charles, I feel a great deal, God chastens me with strong pain, but I praise Him for it, I thank Him for it, I love Him for it." . . . On my brother's asking him, "Whether he was not near heaven?" he answered distinctly, and with the most of hope and triumph that could be expressed in words, "Yes, I am." He spoke once more, just after my brother had used the commendatory prayer; his last words were, "Now, you have done all." From this time till about sunset he made signs of offering up himself, till my brother having again used the prayer, the very moment it was finished, he expired.' So closed the chequered life of one of the most noble-minded, active, cultured, faithful sons of the English Church.

The living was given away in May, resulting in the speedy dispersal of the family, Mrs. Wesley finding a temporary home with her eldest daughter, Emilia, at her school in Gainsborough, and thus closed also the history of that distinguished, that unique home at Epworth Parsonage.¹

Wesley returned to Oxford to pursue his favourite work there. Many years afterwards, he wrote of this time, 'Having now obtained what I long desired, a company of friends that were as my own soul, I set up my rest, being fully determined to live and die in this sweet retirement.'² But Wesley was not his own master. He was in higher hands. He must now prove that 'the way of man is not in himself,' that 'it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' A little while before his death, Samuel Wesley had requested his son John to present a copy of his work on Job to Queen Caroline, to whom it was dedicated ; and during the preceding year Wesley had already spent some time in London on business relating to the publishing of this book. Almost as soon as he had returned to Oxford from his father's funeral he had occasion again to go to London on this account.³

¹ In the autumn of 1736, Mrs. Wesley went to reside with her son Samuel, at Tiverton, remaining there till July of the following year, when she removed to Wootton, Wilts, where her son-in-law, Westley Hall, was curate. In the course of a few months they went to Salisbury, and during their stay there John and Charles returned from Georgia. Mr. Hall removed to London in the spring of 1739 ; and late in the year the Foundery was opened, and Mrs. Wesley found her last home there.

² *Works*, xiii. 270.

³ It was in this year, probably in one of these visits to London, that the following incident occurred. It was thus related by Wesley (Sunday, January 28, 1776) to Mr. Thomas Letts, at All Hallows

Here he met with his friend Dr. Burton, of Corpus Christi College, and was by him introduced to General Oglethorpe, who had been a friend and correspondent of his father's. General Oglethorpe had just returned from Georgia, whither he had gone to aid in establishing the colony newly founded there. The trustees of the colony, of whom Dr. Burton was one, were desirous of securing the services of John and Charles Wesley, and some of their companions, to minister to the colonists, and to act as missionaries to the Indians. The subject was now named to Wesley, and he was strongly urged to comply with the request. At first, he says,¹ he peremptorily refused; but many providential incidents followed, which at length constrained him to alter his resolution. After taking counsel with his brother Samuel and with Mr. Law, and visiting Manchester to consult his friends Clayton and Byrom, he went to Gainsborough, where he spent three days with his widowed mother, and laid the whole matter before her and his eldest sister, Emily; having secretly

Church, Lombard Street. While putting on his gown in the vestry, he said, 'It is fifty years, sir, since I first preached in this church. I remember it from a peculiar circumstance that occurred at that time. I came without a sermon, and going up the pulpit stairs I hesitated, and returned into the vestry under much mental confusion and agitation. A woman who was there noticed that I was deeply agitated, and she inquired, "Pray, sir, what is the matter with you?" I replied, "I have not brought a sermon with me." Putting her hand upon my shoulder, she said, "Is that all? Cannot you trust God for a sermon?" That question had such an effect upon me that I ascended the pulpit and preached extempore, with great freedom to myself and acceptance to the people, and I have never since taken a written sermon into the pulpit?' (*Wesleyan Magazine*, 1825, p. 106; *Journal*, January 28, 1776). This incident is recorded in the vestry of the church.

¹ *Works*, xiii. 270.

determined that he would accept his mother's decision as indicating to him the will of God. The noble and heroic woman, dependent as she was upon her sons, her chief support and comfort in her declining years, and clinging to them with a fervent devotion, boldly declared, 'Had I twenty sons I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more.'¹

That this would have had his father's approbation cannot be doubted, when it is known that, six months before his death, he had written thus to General Oglethorpe: 'I am at length, I thank God, slowly recovering from a long illness, during which there have been few days or nights but my heart has been working hard for Georgia. I had always so dear a love for your colony, that if it had been ten years ago, I would gladly have devoted the remainder of my life and labours to that place, and think I might, before his time, have conquered the language—without which little can be done among the natives—if the Bishop of London would have done me the honour to have sent me thither, as perhaps he then might. But that is now over. However, I can still reach them with my prayers, which I am sure will never be wanting.'² This is most interesting in the light of subsequent events. Little thought he at that time that in less than twelve months two of his sons would have embarked on this enterprise.

Samuel Wesley³ and Emilia both approved of his accepting the proposal, but Wesley himself still hesitated. Dr. Burton wrote a pressing letter to him

¹ Kirk, *The Mother of the Wesleys*, p. 218.

² *Ibid.*, 217.

³ Moore, i. 234.

on September 8, to the persuasions of which he finally yielded. When his brother Charles heard of this, he declared his willingness to accompany him. This was vehemently opposed by Samuel, but in vain. Charles engaged himself as secretary to General Oglethorpe, and also as Secretary for Indian Affairs. At this time Charles was not ordained, and was not forward to be; but his brother overruled his disinclination, and he was ordained deacon by Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford, and on the Sunday following priest by Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London.

It does not appear that Wesley's consent to go to Georgia arose out of any change in his views as to the attractiveness of Oxford life and the value of his work there, for he evidently underwent a very severe struggle before he yielded. And it is equally evident that his compliance was against his own strong preferences and inclinations. It is reasonable, however, to suppose that the partial dissolution of his purpose to remain, which was brought about by the pressure that induced him to apply for the cure at Epworth, had in some measure prepared him to receive the forcible considerations that were brought before him by Oglethorpe and Burton; and it is not unfair to conclude that the conviction was wrought in his mind by them, that the work in Georgia offered to him more favourable conditions for his own progress in holiness (his supreme desire); a wider field for usefulness; and, assuredly, a more powerful appeal to his charity.

Writing many years after of this juncture in his history, in reply to a public assertion that he early had a very strong impression of his designation to

some extraordinary work, he says : ' Indeed not I ; I never said so ; I never thought so ; I am guiltless in this matter. The strongest impression I had till I was three or four and twenty was—

Inter sylvas Academi quærere verum ;

and afterwards (while I was my father's curate), to save my own soul and those that heard me. When I returned to Oxford it was my full resolve to live and die there ; the reasons for which I gave in a long letter to my father, since printed in one of my Journals.¹ In this purpose I continued, till Dr. Burton, one of the trustees for Georgia, pressed me to go over with General Oglethorpe (who is still alive, and well knows the whole transaction), in order to preach to the Indians. With great difficulty I was prevailed upon to go, and spend upwards of two years abroad.'²

In a letter to ' A Friend,' from which the following extracts are taken, Wesley gives his reasons for going forth on this mission.

' October 10, 1735.

' DEAR SIR,

' I have been hitherto unwilling to mention the grounds of my design of embarking for Georgia, for two reasons—one, because they were such as I know few men would judge to be of any weight ; the other, because I was afraid of making favourable judges think of me above what they ought to think : and what a snare this must be to my own soul, I know by dear-bought experience. . . .

' My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the

¹ March 28, 1739.

² *Works*, xiii. 372.

heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text ; no vain philosophy to corrupt it ; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths, to reconcile earthly mindedness and faith, the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world. . . .

‘A right faith will, I trust, by the mercy of God, open the way for a right practice ; especially when most of those temptations are removed which here so easily beset me. Toward mortifying “the desire of the flesh,” the desire of sensual pleasures, it will be no small thing to be able, without fear of giving offence, to live on water and the fruits of the earth. This simplicity of food will, I trust, be a blessed means, both of preventing my seeking that happiness in meats and drinks, which God designed should be found only in faith, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; and will assist me to attain such purity of thought, as suits a candidate for the state wherein they are as the angels of God in heaven.

‘Neither is it a small thing to be delivered from so many occasions, as now surround me, of indulging “the desire of the eye.” They here compass me in on every side ; but an Indian hut affords no food for curiosity, no gratification of the desire of grand, or new, or pretty things—though, indeed, the cedars which God has planted round it may so gratify the eye as to better the heart, by lifting it to Him whose name alone is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth.

‘If by “the pride of life” we understand the pomp and show of the world, that has no place in the wilds of America. If it mean pride in general, this, alas ! has a place everywhere : yet there are very uncommon helps against it, not only by the deep humility of the poor heathens, fully sensible of their want of an instructor ; but by that happy contempt which cannot fail to attend all who sincerely endeavour to instruct them. . . .

‘Further : a sin which easily besets me is, unfaithfulness to God in the use of speech. I know that this is a talent

intrusted to me by my Lord, to be used, as all others, only for His glory. . . . But, I hope, from the moment I leave the English shore, under the acknowledged character of a teacher sent from God, there shall be no word heard from my lips but what properly flows from that character : as my tongue is a devoted thing, I hope from the first hour of this new era to use it only as such, that all who hear me may know of a truth, the words I speak are not mine, but His that sent me.

‘The same faithfulness I hope to show, through His grace, in dispensing the rest of my Master’s goods, if it please Him to send me to those who, like His first followers, have all things common. What a guard is here against that root of evil, the love of money, and all the vile attractions that spring from it ! . . .

‘I then hope to know what it is to love my neighbour as myself, and to feel the powers of that second motive to visit the heathens, even the desire to impart to them what I have received—a saving knowledge of the Gospel of Christ ; but this I dare not think on yet. It is not for me, who have been a grievous sinner from my youth up, and am yet laden with foolish and hurtful desires, to expect God should work so great things by my hands ; but I am assured, if I be once converted myself, He will then employ me both to strengthen my brethren, and to preach His name to the Gentiles, that the very ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.

‘But you will perhaps ask, “Cannot you save your own soul in England, as well as in Georgia ?” I answer, No ; neither can I hope to attain the same degree of holiness here, which I may there. . . .

‘To the other motive—the hope of doing more good in America, it is commonly objected, that “there are Heathens enough in practice, if not theory, at home : why, then, should you go to those in America ?” Why, for a very plain reason : because these heathens have Moses and the Prophets, and those have not. . . .

‘If you object, further, the losses I must sustain in leaving my native country, I ask, Loss of what? of anything I desire to keep? No; I shall still have food to eat, and raiment to put on—enough of such food as I choose to eat, and such raiment as I desire to put on—and if any man have a desire of other things, or of more food than he can eat, or more raiment than he can put on, let him know, that the greatest blessing that can possibly befall him, is, to be cut off from all occasions of gratifying those desires. . . .

‘But what shall we say to the loss of parents, brethren, sisters, nay, of the friends which are as my own soul. “What shall we say?” Why, that if you add the loss of life to the rest, so much the greater is the gain. For though “the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, the Word of our God shall stand for ever;” saying, that when human instruments are removed, He, the Lord, will answer us by His own self. And the general answer which He hath already given us to all questions of this nature is, “Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left father, or mother, or lands, for my sake, but shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.”’¹

In summarizing the period just reviewed, Isaac Taylor makes the following observations: ‘Wesley’s state of mind, and his habits at Oxford, included much intensity of feeling, brought to a focus-spot upon his individual welfare. It would be harsh and inaccurate to designate this introverted feeling as *selfishness*; or if we were to do so, an appeal might fairly be made to the self-denying labours and charities of Wesley, and of others who may come under the same description. But there may be much egotism where there is also much self-denial for the

¹ *Works*, xii. 35.

good of others. That which disperses this species of concentration, and which gives full play to a genuine benevolence, is a better understanding of the Gospel than Wesley had at this time, or until long afterwards, attained. And yet we might say that Wesley's ascetic notions and practices, and the dangerous extent to which he went in fasting, were less indicative of his imperfect apprehension of Christianity, than was the pertinacious opposition he made to his father's proposal that he should take steps for being appointed as his successor at Epworth. In fact, his earnest piety had brought out, and given force to, that self-determining energy which was to qualify him for his function as founder and ruler of a society ; but at this time it showed itself in an immovable resolution to think only of his own (supposed) spiritual welfare ; and in defending himself in this position, he stretched sophistry to the utmost, evading, by shallow pleas, at once the import of his ordination vow, a clear call to extensive usefulness, and (if such considerations might be listened to) the duty of a son toward his parents. While we mark the overruling hand which had otherwise disposed Wesley's lot, his own part on this occasion—that is to say, in clinging to his college life when a populous parish was before him—shows clearly enough that a wilfulness still held its mastery in his mind, which years of severe discipline were needed to dispel. Yet this state of his mind was nothing more than a stage in his progress ; it was not a mood in which a nature so noble (Christian principles apart) could have remained stationary. Christian principles, with a discipline efficient for its purpose, did at length thoroughly set him free from

the bondage of every restrictive or self-regarding motive, and thenceforward as large and warm a philanthropy as a human bosom has ever admitted ruled him supremely.' ¹

The name of George Whitefield must be mentioned here, as it must be again and again, and always with the respect due to one of the mightiest heralds of the Gospel known in all modern times. Born in the 'Bell Inn,' Gloucester, December 16 (O.S.), 1714, he was committed, from the second year of his age, to the sole care of a tender, faithful, loving, widowed mother, whom he ever held in reverent affection. At four years of age he had the measles, which, through the negligence of his nurse, left one of his dark-blue eyes with a squint. His surroundings were not favourable to the growth of goodness, and he became habituated to lying, evil-speaking and petty thefts, card-playing and Sabbath-breaking; overflowing with animal energy, full of wild, roguish tricks, with an impetuous, fiery spirit, and quick temper. But some seeds of goodness were sown in his young heart; and, though their growth was hindered by other influences, it was not wholly prevented. He was fascinated with stage-plays, spending whole days in studying and preparing to act them. Having a good memory, and a fine natural elocution, he was commonly selected to deliver the annual oration at the Grammar School of St. Mary de Crypt. It is related that with part of the money he received for his good acting and reciting, he purchased Ken's *Manual for Winchester Scholars*, a book which had affected him much when his brother used to read it

¹ *Wesley and Methodism*, p. 29.

Christ's disciple, I resolved to renounce them, though as dear to me as my own soul.

Accordingly, the next day, being Wednesday, whereon we kept one of our weekly fasts, instead of meeting with my brethren as usual, I went out into the fields, and prayed silently by myself. Our evening meeting I neglected also, and went not to breakfast, according to appointment, with Mr. Charles Wesley the day following. This, with many other concurring circumstances, made him suspect something more than ordinary was the matter. He came to my room, apprised me of my danger if I would not take his advice; recommended me to his brother John, Fellow of Lincoln College, as more experienced than himself. God gave me a teachable temper; I waited upon his brother, who advised me to resume all my externals, though not to *depend* on them in the least, and from time to time he gave me directions as my pitiable state required.

'Soon after this Lent came on, which our friends [the little band of Methodists] kept very strictly, eating no flesh during the six weeks, except on Saturdays and Sundays. I abstained frequently on Saturdays also, and ate nothing on the other days (except on Sunday) but sage tea without sugar, and coarse bread. I likewise constantly walked out in the cold mornings, till part of one of my hands was quite black. This, with my continued abstinence and inward conflicts, at length so emaciated my body, that at Passion week, finding I could scarcely creep upstairs, I was obliged to inform my kind tutor of my condition, who immediately sent for a physician to me.

'This caused no small triumph amongst the gownsmen, who began to cry out, "What is his fasting come to now?" But, however, notwithstanding my fit of sickness continued six or seven weeks, I trust I shall have reason to bless God for it, through the endless ages of eternity. For, about the end of the seventh week, after having undergone innumerable buffetings of Satan, and many months inexpressible trials by night and day under the Spirit of Bondage,

God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold on his dear Son by a living faith, and by giving me the Spirit of Adoption, to seal me, as I humbly hope, even to the day of everlasting redemption.

‘But oh, with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of and big with glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off; and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full Assurance of Faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the Day of my Espousals, a day to be had in everlasting remembrance. At first my joys were like a spring tide, and as it were overflowed the banks. Go where I would, I could not avoid singing of Psalms almost aloud; afterwards it became more settled, and, blessed be God, saving a few casual intervals, abode and increased in my soul ever since. . . . My mind being now more open and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures (upon my knees), laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light and power from above; and found it profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,—every way sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word or work.’

Whitefield was behind Wesley in years and attainments, but he was before him, in point of time, in securing the joyous blessedness of the gospel faith.

Whitefield was ordained by Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloucester, who, having previously inquired his age (he was in his twenty-second year), said, ‘Notwithstanding I have declared I would not ordain any one under three and twenty, yet I shall think it my duty to ordain you whenever you come for Holy Orders.’ He tells us that he spent the day before

his ordination in abstinence and prayer. In the evening he retired to a hill near the town, and prayed fervently for about two hours, in behalf of himself and those that were to be ordained with him. On Sunday morning he rose early, and prayed over St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, and more particularly over that precept, *Let no one despise thy youth*. And he says, 'When the Bishop laid his hands upon my head, if my vile heart doth not deceive me, I offered up my whole spirit, soul, and body to the service of God's Sanctuary, and afterwards sealed the good confession I had made before many witnesses [by partaking of the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's most blessed body and blood.'

Whitefield's ordination took place at Gloucester on Trinity Sunday, 1736, and he preached his sermon on *The Necessity and Benefit of Religious Society*, to a very crowded audience the following Lord's day, in the Church in which he was baptized. He then set out to Oxford, where he was received by his friends with great joy. A week later he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts, after having been at the University three years and three quarters.

It has seemed right to give this account of one of the Oxford band of Methodists, inasmuch as he stands distinguished from the others by his identification with the subsequent great Methodist movement, and by his intimate association with Wesley.

The little band of Oxford Methodists now passes from our view. It was not only deprived of the Wesleys and Ingham, but other members of it removed from Oxford about the same time. Mr. Kinchin,

however, was elected Dean of Corpus Christi College, which compelled his frequent residence there; he remained faithful to the principles of the Methodists; and Dr. Hutchins, Hervey's tutor, continued to be an Oxford Methodist long after all his old friends had gone. It has been suggested that, on the removal of the Wesleys, the few remaining Methodists came under Whitefield's care. Not precisely so; for though he exerted a powerful influence upon them when he was present, yet he was much away from Oxford during the time that elapsed between Wesley's departure for Georgia and his own. We find him at Oxford about the end of June, 1737, 'where,' he says, 'we had, as it were, a *rendezvous* of the Methodists, and finding their interests flourishing, I hastened away and came to London about the end of August.'¹ He embarked for Georgia on December 28, 1737.

¹ See the account, 'From my Infancy to my first Embarking for Georgia,' prefixed to Whitefield's *Journals*.

CHAPTER IV

GEORGIA: MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE

ON Tuesday, October 14, 1735, Wesley, then in the thirty-third year of his age, took boat for Gravesend, in order to embark for Georgia, under the sanction of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, in company with his brother Charles, Mr. Benjamin Ingham, of Queen's College, Oxford, and Mr. Charles Delamotte, son of a merchant in London.¹ He says the end they had in view was not to avoid want (God having given them plenty of temporal blessings), nor to gain riches or honour, but singly this: to save their own souls, to live wholly to the glory of God. It is strange, but significant of the state of Wesley's mind at this time, that he does not here give prominence to—does not even mention—the purpose of being useful to the colonials in the new settlement of Georgia, or to the Indians beyond it.

¹ Mr. Delamotte was so attached to Wesley that when he heard he was about to embark for Georgia he determined to go with him, and to act as his servant. He lived with Wesley, served under him as a son in the Gospel, did much good, and endured great hardships for the sake of Christ. On his return to England he became a Moravian, settled at Barrow-upon-Humber, where he spent a long life of piety and peace, and died in 1796. MSS. quoted by Tyerman, i. 119.

They had on board with them as fellow-passengers twenty-six Moravians, who were also proceeding to Georgia. Wesley at once began to learn the German language in order to converse with them ; and at the same time David Nitschman, Bishop of the Moravians, with two others, began to learn English. These were the initial stages of Wesley's association with a community that was destined to exert so great an influence on all his future career. On the first Sunday, the weather being fair and calm, service was held on deck, when Wesley preached extempore, and then administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to half a dozen communicants.

Believing that denying themselves, even in the smallest instances, might by the blessing of God be helpful to them, Wesley and his three companions left off the use of flesh and wine, and confined themselves to vegetable food, chiefly rice and biscuit. The picture of the daily occupation of the little company is instructive. It is thus described by Wesley : ' We now began to be a little regular. Our common way of living was this : from four in the morning till five, each of us used private prayer. From five to seven we read the Bible together, carefully comparing it (that we might not lean to our own understandings) with the writings of the earliest ages. At seven we breakfasted. At eight were the public prayers. From nine to twelve I usually learned German, and Mr. Delamotte Greek. My brother writ sermons, and Mr. Ingham instructed the children. At twelve we met to give account to one another what we had done since our last meeting, and what we designed to do before our next. About one we

dined. The time from dinner to four we spent in reading to those whom each of us had taken in charge, or in speaking to them severally, as need required. At four were the evening prayers, when either the second lesson was explained (as it always was in the morning), or the children were catechised and instructed before the congregation. From five to six we again used private prayer. From six to seven I read in our cabin to two or three of the passengers (of whom were about eighty English on board), and each of my brethren to a few more in theirs. At seven I joined with the Germans in their public service; while Mr. Ingham was reading between the decks to as many as desired to hear. At eight we met again, to exhort and instruct one another. Between nine and ten we went to bed, where neither the roaring of the sea nor the motion of the ship could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave us.¹

The vessel was detained at Cowes for a short time. While they were walking on shore the following resolutions were drawn up and signed:

‘In the name of God, Amen! We, whose names are underwritten, being fully convinced that it is impossible, either to promote the work of God among the heathen, without an entire union among ourselves, or that such a union should subsist, unless each one will give up his single judgment to that of the majority, do agree, by the help of God:—first, that none of us will undertake anything of importance without first proposing it to the other three;—secondly, that whenever our judgments differ, any one shall give up his single judgment or inclination to the others;—

¹ *Journal.*

thirdly, that in case of an equality, after begging God's direction, the matter shall be decided by lot.

'JOHN WESLEY,

'CHARLES WESLEY,

'BENJAMIN INGHAM,

'CHARLES DELAMOTTE.'¹

When they were in the Bay of Biscay a storm arose, the sea breaking over the ship from stem to stern. Wesley says, 'About eleven I lay down in the great cabin, and in a short time fell asleep, though very uncertain whether I should wake alive, and much ashamed of my unwillingness to die.' Having been much impressed with the seriousness of the German passengers, their humility in performing servile offices for others, their meekness, which no injury seemed able to move, and their patience under provocation, an opportunity was now afforded him of trying whether they were delivered from fear. He says, 'In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards, "Were you not afraid?" He answered, "I thank God, no." I asked, "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied mildly, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."' This incident deeply impressed him, and it had an important bearing on his mind in after days.

¹ Ingham's *Journal*, quoted by Tyerman.

On February 5, 1736, the Savannah River was reached, and on the following day the emigrants first set foot on American soil, on a small uninhabited island over against Tybee. They knelt on the ground and gave thanks for their safe arrival. On the following day Wesley sought advice respecting his conduct from Mr. Spangenberg, one of the German (Moravian) pastors, and one of the first to greet him on the shores of Georgia, who instantly probed him to the quick by inquiring, 'Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?' Surprised, he knew not what to answer. Wesley was out of his depth here. Again he was pressed. 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' He paused, and said, 'I know He is the Saviour of the world.' 'True; but do you know He has saved you?' 'I hope He has died to save me.' Then, Wesley says, he only added, 'Do you know yourself?' I said, 'I do.' But he feared they were 'vain words.' His interest in this people deepened, and he took an early opportunity of pressing many questions upon Spangenberg respecting the Moravian Church.

Having taken up his lodgings with the Germans, he was enabled daily to observe their whole behaviour. Slowly and silently, and all unconsciously, were these humble people helping to prepare the docile learner for his future great work. The simplicity and solemnity of an election and ordination of a bishop of the German Church made him forget, he says, the seventeen hundred years between, and to imagine himself in 'one of those assemblies where form and state were not; but Paul the tent-maker, or Peter

the fisherman, presided ; yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.'¹

On Sunday, March 7, Wesley entered upon his ministry at Savannah, his brother and their companion Ingham having removed to Frederica, while Delamotte remained at Savannah. They at once began to try whether life might not be as well sustained by one sort as by a variety of food. They made the experiment with bread, and said they were never more vigorous and healthy than while they tasted nothing else. Not finding any door open as yet for pursuing their main design of preaching to the Indians, but keeping this always in view, they considered how they could be most useful to the little flock at Savannah, as the minister of the town, Mr. Quincy, had removed to Carolina.

Receiving letters from Frederica urging him to go there, he and Delamotte embarked on a 'pet-tiawga,' a sort of flat-bottomed boat. On the way, they anchored near Skidoway island. Wesley had lain down to sleep, wrapped from head to foot in a large cloak. Between one and two o'clock he awoke under water, having rolled out of the boat, but so fast asleep that he did not find out where he was until his mouth was full of water. But for his awaking he must have been drowned. However, he swam to the

¹ The reference is to the ordination by Bishop Nitschmann, of Anton Seiffart, who became a personal friend of Wesley, and who is said to have dissuaded him from his intention of joining the Moravian Church ; assuring him that God had given him another calling in which he might be more extensively useful. When they met, old and grey-headed, on Wesley's eightieth birthday, at Ziest, in Holland, Wesley reminded his episcopal friend of the advice he had given him in Georgia, and declared that its soundness had been proved by the experience of each succeeding day.—*Life of Böhler*, by Rev. J. P. Lockwood.

boat, and escaped with nothing more serious than the wetting of his clothes.¹ He found his brother exceedingly weak and ill. Having adjusted matters at Frederica to the best of his ability, he returned to Savannah. He at once gave notice of his design to administer the Holy Communion every Sunday, 'according to the rules of our Church.' Adhering to the rubric, he baptized by immersion, save where the parents affirmed the child to be weak. Being asked to baptize the child of one of the bailiffs of Savannah, the parents refusing either to declare the child weak or to submit to its being dipped, he retired, leaving the child to be baptized by another. He divided the public prayers 'according to the original appointment of the Church.' The morning service began at five; the communion service with sermon at eleven; the evening service about three. The parishioners were visited in order from house to house, from twelve to three o'clock, the hours when they were most at liberty, being then unable to work because of the heat of the day. The more serious members of the congregation were advised to form themselves into a sort of little society, and to meet once or twice a week in order to improve, instruct, and exhort one another; to select out of these a smaller number for a more intimate union with each other, which might be forwarded partly by his conversing singly with each, and partly by his gathering them all together at his own house. These methods are evidently borrowed from his Moravian neighbours, and anticipate the class and band meetings of Methodism at a subsequent period.

¹ His pocket Diary for this year bears the marks of this and other submersions.—See *Proceedings of Wesley Historical Society*, vol. i. p. 79.

Bolzius, the Salzburger pastor, says, 'At present, prayers are daily held at Savannah morning and evening in the church, and every Wednesday Mr. Wesley either preaches a sermon or catechises the children. It is said that he takes his office most seriously to heart, but also has his share of trials about it. . . . Mr. Wesley is not a little troubled and discouraged at the refractoriness of his hearers, though he takes great pains to bring about their conversion by means of an exposition of God's word that is certainly thorough and edifying.' This was the good pastor Bolzius, whom Wesley refused to admit to the Lord's Supper because he had not been episcopally ordained.¹

Pastor Gronau writes, 'Mr. Wesley is in sympathy with the good that he has learned of our community, and would wish to accomplish more than he sees done at Savannah. When he heard us tell recently of the house-to-house visitation that we had established, and of the Divine blessing and awakening that attended it, both for pastors and people, he was glad, but lamented lack of success hitherto among his own hearers. He brought forward several reasons why the people at Savannah became no better obedient to the Gospel of Christ. Of these, one was the ridicule and persecution which those had to suffer who showed a change of heart. But I had to tell him from experience that God was leading souls at our place by the same old way, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," even if it was not so manifest. . . . He frequently sings German hymns, and commended the advantage our

¹ See below, p. 151.

Church has over others in the possession of such a rich hymnology.'¹

Wesley had not yet learned to wield the true power of the Gospel, as will clearly be seen, if the following may be taken as an accurate description of his teaching at the time :

'We have before us a number of unpublished sermons written by Wesley at Oxford, during the ten years which followed his ordination. . . . In not one of them is there any view whatever, any glimpse, afforded of Christ in any of his offices. His name occurs in the benediction. That is about all. Frequent communion is insisted on as a source of spiritual quickening ; regeneration by baptism is assumed as the true doctrine of the Church ; but Christ is nowhere, either in His life, His death, or His intercession. Church formalism and strict morality, ceremonies and ethics, are all in all.'²

Charles Wesley spent nine weeks at Frederica, the whole of which time was marked by heroic toil and endurance, by much mental suffering through unkind treatment, and by much bodily pain. Daily from morn till eve he laboured to promote the welfare of his little flock, both by private admonition and by public services—four of which he held daily, usually in the open air, giving an extemporaneous exposition of the daily lessons at morning and evening prayer. Every hour that could be spared from his secretarial duties was thus engrossed. Those duties did not sit lightly upon him. At the end of the first week he writes, 'I was wholly spent in writing letters for

¹ *The Christian Advocate*, February, 1904.

² *London Quarterly Review*, January, 1868.

Mr. Oglethorpe. I would not spend six days more in the same manner for all Georgia.' But his labours brought little success. He was rigorous in his adhesion to ecclesiastical order; he baptized the children by trine immersion, and preached with boldness on singleness of intention. He exposed the vices of the people with an unsparing hand; but he brought them no release from these evils. The gospel salvation for sinners he had not yet learnt for himself, and therefore could not preach it. 'Several of his Frederica sermons are extant. The doctrines are those of William Law. The pleasures of this world are all vain and sinful, and therefore to be renounced; the evils of our nature render us unfit for the service of God, and are to be mortified by fasting, prayer, and a constant course of universal self-denial; we are the creatures of God, and are therefore to devote ourselves to Him in body, soul and spirit, with the utmost fervour, simplicity, and purity of intention. But we look in vain for correct views of the atonement and intercession of Christ, and of the offices of the Holy Spirit. No satisfactory answer is given to the question, What must I do to be saved? Men are required to run the race of Christian holiness with a load of guilt upon their consciences, and with the corruption of their nature unsubdued by renewing grace. He has no just conception of a sinner's justification before God. He never represents it as consisting in the full and unmerited forgiveness of all past sins, obtained not by works of righteousness, but by the simple exercise of faith in a penitent state of heart; and immediately followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, producing

peace of conscience, the filial spirit, power over sin, and the joyous hope of eternal life. He satisfies himself with reproofing the vices and sins of the people with unsparing severity, and with holding up the standard of practical holiness, denouncing the Divine vengeance against all who fall short of it; but without directing them to the only means by which they could obtain forgiveness and a new heart.¹

But other circumstances hindered him. The people were unsettled, being in constant alarm from the Spaniards. His faithful reproofs stirred up antagonism, which speedily ripened into revenge amongst those of lax morality. Plots were formed against him, and even shots were fired at him from the woods. Idle tales were reported to the all too susceptible Governor, who unhappily credited them, leading him to a course of harsh ill-treatment and many indignities. 'Mr. O. gave away my bedstead from under me, and refused to spare one of the carpenters to mend me up another.'² Lacking at times even the necessities of life, suffering from fever and dysentery, he was even denied every means of comfort and relief, save that he changed his usual bed, the floor, for the top of a chest. In consequence of his growing weakness, the poor sufferer was brought near to death, which he seemed almost to covet. 'My brother,' he says, 'brought me off a resolution, which honour and indignation had formed, of starving rather than ask for necessities. . . . At night, when my fever was somewhat abated, I was led out to bury the scout boatman, and envied him his quiet

¹ Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, i. 53.

² C. Wesley's *Journal*, April 6, 1736.

grave.' Of a sensitive disposition, he passed through an agony of mental and physical suffering.

He had spent little more than a fortnight in Frederica when his heart failed within him. In writing to his brother he says, 'Stay till you are in disgrace, in persecution, by the heathen, by your own countrymen; till you are accounted the offscouring of all things (as you must infallibly be, if God is true), and then see who will follow you. I.'¹

He was in his novitiate; he was being trained for higher work. The disappointment that revealed the error of his present methods was part of a preparation for a firm obedience unto the faith, when it should be revealed to him. He was not favoured, like his brother, with the daily fellowship of the cheerful and happy Moravians, who, for the present, were the chosen instruments for opening the eyes of these noble young men, and for leading them into the light and liberty of the Gospel. He had not progressed equally in spiritual knowledge with his brother, nor was he pressing after it with the same steady eagerness. He had not equal self-control; nor, with his peculiar susceptibility to depression, aggravated by his weak physical condition, had he equal comfort in his work.

At length the duties of his secretariat brought him to Savannah. Leaving Frederica, he says, 'I was overjoyed at my deliverance out of this furnace, and not a little ashamed of myself for being so.' He remained at Savannah nine weeks, taking charge, while his brother was at Frederica.

Having to return to England as the bearer of

¹ Moore, i. 273.

despatches from the Governor to the trustees of the colonies, he embarked on August 11, intending to return not as a secretary, which office he resigned, but as a missionary. This purpose, however, was frustrated.

Both Wesley and Ingham desiring to be *missioners* to the Indians, and not chaplains to English colonists, Ingham arranged to spend three days in each week in learning the Indian language from a half-caste woman; and on the other three to teach what he had learned to Wesley and to Nitschman, the Moravian bishop. They also arranged to supply in turns Charles's place at Frederica.

Wesley was now in hopes that a door was opened for going up immediately to the Choctaws, "the least *polished*, *i.e.* the least corrupted, of all the Indian nations." But upon his informing the General of this design, the latter objected, not only the danger of being intercepted or killed by the French there, but much more, the inexpediency of leaving Savannah destitute of a minister. These objections he related to his friends in the evening, with his characteristic desire to be led rather than to lead; and they were all of opinion "that they ought not to go yet."¹

As affecting his ecclesiastical views, it may be mentioned here that, by reading over with Mr. Delamotte Bishop Beveridge's *Pandectæ Canonum Conciliorum*, he had been effectually convinced that both particular and General Councils may err, and have erred; and of the infinite distance there is between the decisions of the wisest men, and those of the Holy Ghost recorded in the Word.

About the close of November Oglethorpe sailed

¹ Moore, i. 303.



GENERAL OGLETHORPE.

COUNT ZINZENDORF.

PETER BÖHLER.

JOHN CENNICK.

VINCENT PERRONET.

for England, leaving Wesley, Delamotte, and Ingham at Savannah, 'but,' says Wesley, 'with less prospect of preaching to the Indians than we had the first day we set foot in America.' Whenever he had mentioned the matter, the reply was, 'You cannot leave Savannah without a minister.' To this he answered, 'I know not that I am under any obligation to the contrary. I never promised to stay here one month. I openly declared both before, at, and ever since my coming hither, that I neither would nor could take charge of the English any longer than till I could go among the Indians.' If it was said, 'But did not the trustees of Savannah appoint you to be minister of Savannah?' he replied, 'They did; but it was not done by my solicitation: it was done without either my desire or knowledge; therefore I cannot conceive that appointment to lay me under any obligation of continuing there, any longer than till a door is opened to the heathen; and this I expressly declared at the time I consented to accept of that appointment.' However, at the importunate request of the more serious parishioners, he consented to remain till some one came who might supply his place.¹

Gronau, one of the Saltzburger pastors, writing to a friend, says, 'Here in our Indies the prospect of the conversion of the heathen is still very poor, and one would almost despair of it if we had not the clear and plain promises of it in the Holy Scriptures. . . . It is plain that the hindrances placed in the way of the conversion of the heathen by Christians must first be removed.'²

¹ *Journal*.

² *Christian Advocate*, January, 1904.

Early in the new year, he and Delamotte came again to Frederica, only to find things, as they expected, cold and heartless; there was not one who retained his first love. So, having beaten the air, in this unhappy place, for twenty days, Wesley took his final leave of it on January 26, not, he declared, from any apprehension of danger to himself, though his life had been threatened many times, but from an utter despair of doing good there. He had already described the condition of the place, as 'a city that is divided against itself. Where there is no brotherly love, no meekness, no forbearing, or forgiving one another; but envy, malice, revenge, suspicion, anger, clamour, bitterness, evil-speaking, without end!'¹

A dispute having arisen at this time between the gentlemen of Carolina and those of Georgia respecting the right of trading with the Indians, Wesley, who had hitherto confined his attention to matters immediately relating to his ministry, was convinced that a case might arise in which part of his time ought to be employed in other matters. Such a case he thought this to be. He therefore gave himself to the consideration of it, concluding that the question must come to this short issue at last, '(1) Are the Creeks, Cherokees, and Chicashaws within the bounds of Georgia, or no? (2) Is an Act of the King in Council, in pursuance of an Act of Parliament, of any force within these bounds or not? The former of these the Georgian Charter determines; the latter was not questioned by any but the interested parties in Carolina.' He therefore concluded that 'nothing could justify the sending unlicensed traders to these Indians, but the proving

¹ *Journal*, June 3, 1736.

either that the Act is of no force, or that those Indians are not in Georgia.'¹

On March 4, Wesley wrote to the trustees giving an account of the year's expenses, from March 1, 1736, to March 1, 1737, which, deducting extraordinary expenses, such as repairing the parsonage house, and journeys to Frederica, amounted for Mr. Delamotte and himself to £44 4s. 4d., a full proof of the self-denial practised by these good men. He had formed a resolution not to accept of the £50 a year sent by the Society for his maintenance, saying his Fellowship was sufficient for him. His brother Samuel expostulated with him, showing him that, by refusing it, he might injure those who should come after him ; and that, if he did not want it for himself, he might give it away in such manner as he thought proper. He at length yielded in this matter to the solicitations of the Society and the advice of his friends.²

Wesley's ideas of religion, at this period, may be gathered from the following extracts from a letter, dated Savannah, March 28, 1737, and addressed to William Wogan, Esq., in Spring Gardens, London.

'I entirely agree with you, that religion is love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; that, as it is the happiest, so it is the cheerfulest thing in the world ; that it is utterly inconsistent with moroseness, sourness, severity, and indeed with whatever is not according to the softness, sweetness, and gentleness of Christ Jesus. I believe it is equally contrary to all preciseness, stiffness, affectation, and unnecessary singularity. I allow, too, that prudence, as well as zeal, is of the utmost importance in the Christian life. But I do not yet see any possible case wherein trifling

¹ Letter in Whitehead, ii. 18-20.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 29.

conversation can be an instance of it. In the following scriptures I take all such to be flatly forbidden : Matt. xii. 36 ; Eph. v. 4, and iv. 29 ; Col. iv. 6.

‘That I shall be laughed at for this, I know ; so was my Master. I am not for a stern, austere manner of conversing. No : let all the cheerfulness of faith be there, all the joyfulness of hope, all the amiable sweetness—the winning easiness of love. If we must have art, “*Hic mihi erunt artes.*”’¹

Similar sentiments are expressed in another letter, written about the same time :—

‘You seem to apprehend that I believe religion to be inconsistent with cheerfulness, and with a social friendly temper. So far from it, that I am convinced, as true religion cannot be without cheerfulness, so steady cheerfulness cannot be without true religion. I am equally convinced that religion has nothing sour, austere, unsociable, unfriendly in it ; but, on the contrary, implies the most winning sweetness, the most amiable softness and gentleness. Are you for having as much cheerfulness as you can ? So am I. Do you endeavour to keep alive your taste for all the truly innocent pleasures of life ? So do I. Do you refuse no pleasure but what is a hindrance to some greater good, or has a tendency to some evil ? It is my very rule. In particular, I pursue this rule in eating, which I seldom do without much pleasure. I know it is the will of God, that I should enjoy every pleasure that leads to my taking pleasure in Him, and in such a measure as most leads to it. We are to do nothing but what, directly or indirectly, leads to our holiness ; and to do every such thing with this design, and in such a measure as may most promote it.’²

In April of this year, Wesley began to learn the Spanish language, in order to converse with a number

¹ *Methodist Magazine*, 1842, p. 657.

² *Ibid.*

of Jews who were amongst his parishioners. This proved of subsequent service to him; nor was it without benefit to others, for before he left Georgia he translated the exceedingly beautiful hymn 'O God, my God, my All Thou art,' which he inserted in his first hymn-book, printed in Charlestown in the following year. The hymn was frequently reprinted in his various collections of hymns.

Both Wesley and Delamotte did duty as school-masters. The following incident is related of them in this connection: 'Some of the boys in Delamotte's school wore stockings and shoes, and the others not. The former ridiculed the latter. Delamotte tried to put a stop to this uncourteous banter, but told Wesley he had failed. Wesley replied, "I think I can cure it. If you will take charge of my school next week, I will take charge of yours, and will try." The exchange was made, and on Monday morning Wesley went into school barefoot. The children seemed surprised, but without any reference to past jeerings Wesley kept them at their work. Before the week was ended, the shoeless ones began to gather courage; and some of the others, seeing their minister and master come without shoes and stockings, began to copy his example, and thus the evil was effectually cured.'¹

The *Gentleman's Magazine*² is responsible for the following story: 'A wicked woman, whom he had offended, decoyed him into her house, threw him down, and, with her scissors, cut off from one side of his head the whole of those long locks of auburn hair, which he had been accustomed to keep in the

¹ *Methodist Magazine*, 1808, p. 490.

² 1792, p. 24.

most perfect order. After this, he preached at Savannah with his hair long on one side and short on the other, those sitting on the side which had been cut observing, "What a cropped head of hair the young parson has." This has not the least ring of truth in it.

Soon after his arrival in the colony, Wesley had become acquainted with Miss Sophia Christina Hopkey, niece to Mr. Causton, chief magistrate of Savannah, a young lady, beautiful in appearance, of attractive manners, and withal intelligent and cultivated. He soon began to entertain an interest in her that ripened into some measure of affection, which seems to have been reciprocated, though on her part, perhaps, not very fervently. She appeared before Wesley as a religious inquirer, seeking his guidance; she also became his pupil, desiring him to assist her in her French studies. She consulted Oglethorpe as to the kind of dress most likely to please Wesley, and, putting aside her finery, appeared always in neat and simple white attire. It has been thought that Oglethorpe desired, if possible, to bring about a marriage with a view to secure Wesley to the colony.

After Charles had left Frederica in the latter end of July, Wesley frequently visited that place, where he met with the most violent opposition and abuse.¹ He visited it from time to time until October 16, when he received a melancholy account of the state of things there. The public service had been discontinued, and from that time everything had grown worse. He wrote, 'Even poor Miss Sophy, who for

¹ Whitehead, ii. 22.

some time had been living there, was scarce the shadow of what she was when I left her. I endeavoured to convince her of it, but in vain ; and, to put it effectually out of my power to do, she was resolved to return to England immediately.' After several ineffectual attempts, he at length prevailed. 'Nor was it long,' he says, 'before she recovered the ground she had lost.' Being slighted on one occasion by Oglethorpe, he mentioned the circumstance to her, and she said, 'Sir, you encouraged me in my greatest trials ; be not discouraged yourself. Fear nothing ; if Mr. Oglethorpe will not, God will help you.' He then took boat for Savannah with Miss Sophy, and arrived after a slow and dangerous, 'but not a tedious,' passage—six days for a hundred miles. He writes, 'In the beginning of December, I advised Miss Sophy to sup earlier, and not immediately before she went to bed. She did so, and on this little circumstance what an inconceivable train of consequences depend ! Not only "all the colour of remaining life" for her ; but perhaps all my happiness too.' The meaning of this is not obvious, unless in this *tête-à-tête* he made a declaration of affection. She also nursed him in an illness of some days' duration. Moore says, 'Those who have known Mr. Wesley will forestall our judgment here. They well know what impression all this was likely to make. He was indeed—

" . . . Of a constant, loving, noble nature ;
That thinks men honest, if they seem but so."

How, then, must this appearance of strong affection, from a woman of sense and elegance, nay, and as it should seem, of piety too, affect him ! Especially

considering (it is his own account) that he had never before familiarly conversed with any woman except his near relations.' Many passages in the *Journals* show the deep interest which Wesley took in the welfare of this young lady.

There is a difference of opinion here on the part of two of Wesley's earliest biographers, Whitehead and Moore, both of them personally acquainted with Wesley. Whitehead, who had access to Wesley's private Journal, says that, from a perusal of that document, it appears to him that Wesley did intend marriage, and that he was not a little pained when the intercourse was broken off. Moore, on the other hand, commenting on these words, says, 'I know that she ultimately broke it off, but I also know that he did not at any time determine on marriage. I had the whole account from himself, and I do not know that he ever told it to any other person.'

That Wesley was impressed, perhaps fascinated, by this young lady can hardly admit of question. But that he ever directly *proposed* marriage to her is highly improbable; with Moore's words in view, it may be safely affirmed that he did not. Nevertheless, that he contemplated marriage as an ultimate possibility can as little be denied without casting a slur upon his honour. He may have prudently waited, as any sane man would. We know from a manuscript recently made public that he 'kist' her, perhaps with a declaration of love, and that he drew lots whether he should continue, or postpone, or discontinue his attentions.

On March 4, he writes, 'From directions I received from God this day touching an affair of the greatest

importance, I could not but observe, as I have done many times, the entire mistake of those who assert, "God will not answer your prayer, unless your heart be wholly resigned to His will." My heart was not wholly resigned to His will. Therefore, not daring to depend on my own judgment, I cried the more earnestly to Him to supply what was lacking in me. And I know and am assured He heard my voice, and did send forth His light and His truth.' This probably refers to the casting of lots. Whitehead thinks that on this day the affair was finally broken off. Or it may have referred to the following, related by Moore: 'Mr. Delamotte had not learned (to use a common expression of Mr. Wesley's) to "defy suspicion." He thought he saw—semblance of worth, not substance. He therefore embraced an opportunity of expostulating with Mr. Wesley; and asked him if he designed to marry Miss Sophy? At the same time he set forth, in a strong light, her art and his simplicity. Though pleased with the attentions of his fair friend, Mr. Wesley had not allowed himself to determine upon marriage. Mr. Delamotte's question therefore not a little puzzled him. He waived an answer at that time; and, perceiving the prejudice of Mr. Delamotte's mind against the lady, he called on Bishop Nitschman and consulted him. "Marriage," said he, "you know is not unlawful. Whether it is now expedient for you, and whether this lady is a proper wife for you, ought to be maturely weighed." Finding his perplexity increase, he determined to propose his doubts to the elders of the Moravian Church. When he entered the house where they were met together, he found Mr.

Delamotte sitting among them. On his proposing the business, the Bishop replied, "We have considered your case. Will you abide by our decision?" He answered, after some hesitation, "I will." "Then," said the Bishop, "we advise you to proceed no further in this business." He replied, "The will of the Lord be done." From this time he behaved with the greatest caution towards her, and avoided everything that tended to continue the intimacy, though he easily perceived what pain this change in his conduct gave her, as it did also to himself.¹

The above illustrates Wesley's extreme diffidence, and his willingness to be led by the opinions of others, as often exhibited in his subsequent life. It also shows what a powerful influence the Moravians had already begun to exercise upon him. It need hardly be added, that there is not the slightest shadow of a suspicion of his perfectly honourable and upright conduct in the whole affair.

Three days after the incident just related, he wrote in his private Journal, 'March 7.—When I walked with Mr. Causton, to his country lot, I plainly felt that had God given me such a retirement, with the companion I desired, I should have forgot the work for which I was born, and have set up my rest in this world.' However, the affair was quickly ended, for he writes the next day: 'March 8.—Miss Sophy engaged herself to Mr. Williamson, and on Saturday, 12th, they were married at Purrysburgh; this being the day which completed the year from my first speaking to her. What Thou doest, O God, I know not now; but I shall know hereafter.'

¹ Moore, i. 312.

Writing to one of his preachers, Mr. S. Bardsley, in 1786, fifty years after the occurrence, he says, 'I remember when I read these words in the church at Savannah, "Son of man, behold, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke," I was pierced through as with a sword, and could not utter a word more. But our comfort is, He that made the heart can heal the heart.'

Whether the lady's patience was exhausted by Mr. Wesley's slow procedure in the business—for it does not appear that he was in any haste to finish it—or whether she declined entering into the matrimonial state with him on account of his abstemious and rigid manner of life, is uncertain ; but whatever was the cause, it is evident from his own words that he felt a disappointment when she married Mr. Williamson. It seems that he expressed this more fully in a letter to his brother Samuel, who tells him in his answer, 'I am sorry you are disappointed in one match, because you are very unlikely to find another.'¹

It was not long, however, before he saw that he had sufficient cause to be thankful that he had not been permitted to choose for himself. He had frequent occasions for discovering that Mrs. Williamson was not that religious character he had supposed. Three months after her marriage he writes, 'God has showed me yet more of the greatness of my deliverance, by opening to me a new and unexpected scene of Miss Sophy's dissimulation. Oh, never give me over to my own heart's desires ; nor let me follow my own imaginations.'²

¹ Whitehead, ii. 30.

² *Ibid.*

Wesley was thus happily rescued from what could not have been a happy marriage ; and he was also rescued from the limitations of a parish life in a small colony. He was predestined to a greater work, which marriage in that distant land must have prevented. Had he found his sphere there, the great Methodist revival had not been !

As may be supposed, he did not in such a country escape outward perils and sufferings. In one of his journeys on foot with Mr. Delamotte and a guide, after walking two or three hours, the guide told them he did not know where they were. In an hour or two more they came to a cypress swamp, which lay directly across their way. It was too far to turn back ; they therefore walked through it, the water being breast high. By the time they had gone a mile further they were out of all path, and it being now past sunset, they sat down, intending to make a fire, and to stay till morning ; but they found their tinder wet. Wesley advised to walk on, but his companions were faint and weary, so they lay down about six o'clock. The ground was as wet as their clothes, which, there being a sharp frost, were soon frozen together. 'However,' Wesley says, 'I slept till morning. There fell a heavy dew in the night which covered us as white as snow.' Within an hour after sunrise they came to a plantation, and in the evening, without any hurt, to Savannah. A few days afterwards they crossed a river in a small canoe, their horses swimming by the side of it. They made a fire on the bank, and, notwithstanding the rain, slept quietly till the morning.

But trials of another nature awaited him. Wesley

was a 'High Churchman,' and carried out his principles with rigorous exactness. Besides some particulars already mentioned, he required all intending communicants to notify the same to him, according to the rubric; the Sacrament he refused to all who had not been episcopally confirmed; he rebaptized the children of Dissenters, and refused to bury any who had not received episcopal baptism. Not without reason, he has been described as an intolerant, High-Church ritualist. This he himself acknowledged some years afterwards, when, inserting in his Journal a letter he had received from the Rev. John Martin Bolzius (already referred to), a minister at Ebenezer, in Georgia, he adds, 'What a truly Christian piety and simplicity breathe in these lines! And yet this very man, when I was at Savannah, did I refuse to admit to the Lord's Table, because he was not baptized; that is, not baptized by a minister who had been episcopally ordained. Can any one carry High Church zeal higher than this? And how well have I been since beaten with mine own staff.'¹

He continued his pastoral attentions to Mrs. Williamson as one of his parishioners. This aggrieved her husband, who soon after their marriage forbade her to attend Wesley's services, or to speak to him again. She, however, appeared some four months after at a Sacramental service, after which Wesley took occasion to admonish her of conduct which he judged to be reprehensible. In a month's time she appeared again, when Wesley denied her the Sacrament, as she had neither expressed her regret for her faults, nor promised amendment. This

¹ *Journal*, September 30, 1749.

was an act of discipline which he had carried out in other cases. On the following day a warrant was issued for his apprehension, to answer the complaint of William Williamson for defaming his wife and refusing to her the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, without cause, and laying the damages at £1000.

Wesley was arrested and brought before the Bailiff and the Recorder. His answer to the charge was, that, the giving or refusing the Lord's Supper being a matter purely ecclesiastical, he could not acknowledge their power to interrogate him upon it. He was directed to appear at the next court, to be holden in Savannah. Bail being desired, the answer was, 'Mr. Wesley's word is sufficient.'

Two days after, Mr. Causton, who had hitherto shown a friendly regard for Wesley, called upon him and requested him to send to Mrs. Williamson in writing his reasons for repelling her from the Sacrament before the whole congregation. This Wesley did in the following terms :—

'TO MRS. SOPHIA WILLIAMSON.

'At Mr. Causton's request, I write once more. The rules whereby I proceed are these :

"So many as intend to be partakers of the Holy Communion shall signify their names to the curate, at least some time the day before." This you did not do.

"And if any of these have done any wrong to his neighbours, by word or deed, so that the congregation be thereby offended, the curate shall advertise him, that in anywise he presume not to come to the Lord's Table until he hath openly declared himself to have truly repented."

'If you offer yourself at the Lord's Table on Sunday, I will advertise you (as I have done more than once) wherein

you have done wrong. And when you have openly declared yourself to have truly repented, I will administer to you the mysteries of God.

‘JOHN WESLEY.

‘August 11, 1737.’

Mr. Causton after this exerted his influence against Wesley, seeking in every way to poison the minds of the people against him ; while the rest of the family spread abroad the foolish report that Wesley had acted towards Mrs. Williamson, as he had done, purely out of revenge, because she would not marry him.

It may be thought that Wesley was injudicious, or that he was hard in the administration of discipline ; that, instead of proceeding to extremities, he should have tried to persuade the lady to put herself in a right condition to receive the Sacrament. He was always hard where duty was concerned, and never feared the consequences of any act that duty enjoined. But it must be remembered that her husband had forbidden her to speak to him, and that, in addition to reproving her, Wesley had written to her informing her of the particulars of conduct to which he objected. Wesley wrote, at the time :—

‘ I sat still at home, and I thank God easy, having committed my cause to Him ; and remembering His word, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.” I was at first afraid that those who were weak in the faith would be turned out of the way, at least so far as to neglect the public worship, by attending which they were likely to suffer in their temporal concerns. But I feared where no fear was. God took care of this likewise ; insomuch

that on Sunday the 14th, more were present at the morning prayers, than had been for some months before.’¹

A grand jury was called, and forty-four jurors were sworn in, instead of fifteen. Of these, one did not understand English, one was a Papist, one a professed infidel, three were Baptists, sixteen or seventeen others Dissenters, and several others had personal quarrels with him, and had openly avowed vengeance.

A list of grievances was presented, but altered by the grand jury to ten counts. Some days were spent in examining these; and on September 1 a majority of the jury agreed to the following indictments:—

‘1. That, after March 12 last, the said John Wesley did several times privately force his conversation on Sophia Christina Williamson, contrary to the express desire and command of her husband; and did likewise write and privately convey papers to her, thereby occasioning much uneasiness between her and her husband.

‘2. That, on August 7 last, he refused the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to Sophia Christina Williamson, without any apparent reason, much to the disquiet of her mind, and to the great disgrace and hurt of her character.

‘3. That he hath not, since his arrival in Savannah, emitted any public declaration of his adherence to the principles and regulations of the Church of England.

‘4. That, for many months past, he has divided on the Lord’s day the order of morning prayer, appointed to be used in the Church of England, by only reading the said morning prayer and the litany at five or six o’clock, and wholly omitting the same between the hours of nine and eleven o’clock, the customary time of public morning prayer.

‘5. That, about the month of April, 1736, he refused

¹ Whitehead, ii. 38.

to baptize, otherwise than by dipping, the child of Henry Parker, unless the said Henry Parker and his wife would certify that the child was weak and not able to bear dipping ; and added to his refusal, that, unless the said parents would consent to have it dipped, it might die a heathen.

‘ 6. That, notwithstanding he administered the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to William Gough, about the month of March, 1736, he did, within a month after, refuse the Sacrament to the said William Gough, saying that he had heard that William Gough was a Dissenter.

‘ 7. That in June, 1736, he refused reading the Office of the Dead over the body of Nathaniel Polhill, only because Nathaniel Polhill was not of his opinion ; by means of which refusal the said Nathaniel Polhill was interred without the appointed Office for the Burial of the Dead.

‘ 8. That, on or about August 10, 1737, he, in the presence of Thomas Causton, presumptuously called himself “ Ordinary of Savannah,” assuming thereby an authority which did not belong to him.

‘ 9. That in Whitsun-week last he refused William Aglionby to stand godfather to the child of Henry Marley, giving no other reason than that the said William Aglionby had not been at the Communion-table with him.

‘ 10. That, about the month of July last, he baptized the child of Thomas Jones, having only one godfather and god-mother, notwithstanding that Jacob Matthews did offer to stand godfather.’ ¹

Such were the findings of the majority of the grand jury. The minority of twelve, including three constables and six tithingmen, drew up and signed a document, and transmitted it ‘to The Honourable the Trustees for Georgia,’ prefacing the whole with the following :

‘ We, whose names are underwritten, being members of

¹ Wesley’s unpublished journal ; quoted by Tyerman.

the said grand jury, do humbly beg leave to signify our dislike of the said presentments ; being by many and divers circumstances thoroughly persuaded in ourselves that the whole charge against Mr. Wesley is an artifice of Mr. Causton, designed rather to blacken the character of Mr. Wesley, than to free the colony of religious tyranny, as he was pleased in his charge to us to term it. But as these circumstances will be too tedious to trouble your Honours with, we shall only beg leave to give the reasons of our dissent from the particular bills.

‘ 1. That they were thoroughly persuaded that the charges against Mr. Wesley were an artifice of Mr. Causton’s, designed rather to blacken the character of Mr. Wesley than to free the colony from religious tyranny, as he had alleged.

‘ 2. That it did not appear that Mr. Wesley had either spoken in private or written to Mrs. Williamson since the day of her marriage, except one letter, which he wrote on July 5, at the request of her uncle, as a pastor, to exhort and reprove her.

‘ 3. That, though he did refuse the Sacrament to Mrs. Williamson on August 7 last, he did not assume to himself any authority contrary to law, for every person intending to communicate was bound to signify his name to the curate, at least some time the day before ; which Mrs. Williamson did not do ; although Mr. Wesley had often, in full congregation, declared he did insist on a compliance with that rubric, and had before repelled divers persons for non-compliance therewith.

‘ 4. That, though he had not in Savannah emitted any public declaration of his adherence to the principles and regulations of the Church of England, he had done this, in a stronger manner than by a formal declaration, by explaining and defending the three Creeds, the Thirty-nine Articles, the whole Book of Common Prayer, and the homilies ; besides a formal declaration is not required, but from those who have received institution and induction.

‘ 5. That though he had divided, on the Lord’s Day, the

order of morning prayer, this was not contrary to any law in being.

'6. That his refusal to baptize Henry Parker's child, otherwise than by dipping, was justified by the rubric.

'7. That, though he had refused the Sacrament to William Gough, the said William Gough [one of the twelve jurors who signed the document sent to the trustees] publicly declared that the refusal was no grievance to him, because Mr. Wesley had given him reasons with which he was satisfied.

'8. That, in reference to the alleged refusal to read the Burial Service over the body of Nathaniel Polhill, they had good reason to believe that Mr. Wesley was at Frederica, or on his return thence, when Polhill was interred; besides, Polhill was an anabaptist, and desired, in his lifetime, that he might not be buried with the office of the Church of England.

'9. That they were in doubt about the indictment concerning Wesley calling himself "Ordinary of Savannah," not well knowing the meaning of the word.

'10. That, though Mr. Wesley refused to allow William Aglionby to stand godfather to the child of Henry Marley, and Jacob Matthews to stand godfather to the child of Thomas Jones, he was sufficiently justified by the canons of the Church, because neither Aglionby nor Matthews had certified Mr. Wesley that they had ever received the Holy Communion.'

The next day Wesley moved for an immediate hearing of the first count, being the only one of a civil nature. The court evaded the request. Six times did he make application for a hearing without avail.

In the midst of this storm, kept up by the arts of his avowed enemies, without a shilling in his pocket, and three thousand miles from home, Wesley

possessed his soul in peace, and continued to give himself to his work; adding a weekly visit to a number of French families, residing in a village five miles away, to whom every Saturday afternoon he read prayers; and the same to some Germans in another village; then by request to the French at Savannah on Sunday afternoons. So that during the remaining weeks of his stay in Savannah he had full employment for the holy day. The first English prayers lasted from five till half-past six. The Italian, for the benefit of a few Vaudois, began at nine. The second service for the English, including sermon and Communion, was from half-past ten to half-past twelve. The French service began at one. At two he catechised the children. About three began English evening service; after which he had the happiness, he said, of joining with as many as his largest room would hold, in reading, praying, and singing praise. And about six the service of the Moravians began, at which he was glad to be present, not as a teacher, but as a learner. For, with all his High Church sentiments, he was not ashamed to sit at the feet of those who, he was aware, had an experimental knowledge of religion that went beyond his own attainments. He had even joined with them early in August at one of their love-feasts—probably the first time he had been present at such a service. He thus speaks of it: ‘It was begun and ended with thanksgiving and prayer, and celebrated in so decent and solemn a manner, as a Christian of the Apostolic age would have allowed to be worthy of Christ.’ In subsequent years the love-feast became a favourite and profitable service amongst the Methodists, and

love-feasts are still held, though not so frequently as formerly.

On November 1 he received a temporary relief from his pressing wants. He writes, 'Colonel Stephens arrived, by whom I received a benefaction of ten pounds sterling ; after having been for several months without a shilling in the house, but not without peace, health, and contentment.'¹

Early in October he had consulted his friends whether God did not call him to return to England ; seeing the reason for which he left it had now no force, there being no possibility as yet of instructing the Indians, neither had he as yet found or heard of any Indians on the continent of America who had the least desire of being instructed. And as to Savannah, having never engaged himself, either by word or letter, to stay there a day longer than he should judge convenient, nor ever taken charge of the people any otherwise, than as in his passage to the heathen, he looked upon himself as fully discharged from any obligation to remain longer. Besides, there seemed a probability of his doing more service to the people in the colony in England than in Georgia, inasmuch as he could represent without fear or favour to the trustees the real state the colony was in. After deeply considering these things, his friends were unanimous that *he ought to go, but not yet*. So he laid aside the thought of it for that present, being persuaded that when the time was come the way would be made plain before his face.

In the course of two months from that time it

¹ Whitehead, ii. 45.

became evident to him that he had not the remotest prospect of obtaining justice in the courts, and that those in power were combined to oppress him, and could procure evidence (as had been seen) of words he had never spoken and of deeds he had never done. Being, moreover, disappointed of preaching the gospel to the heathen, he again consulted his friends, who now decided that he should at once depart. Accordingly, he put up the following advertisement in the great square :

‘Whereas John Wesley designs shortly to set out for England, this is to desire those who have borrowed any books of him, to return them as soon as they conveniently can to

‘JOHN WESLEY.’

At once he desired money from the chief magistrate to pay his expenses to England, designing to set out immediately. The magistrate told him he should not go out of the province till he had entered into a recognizance to appear at the court, and answer the allegations laid against him. He replied that he had appeared at six courts successively, and had openly desired a trial, but was refused it. They required him to give security to appear again. He asked what security. They replied, a bond to appear at Savannah whenever required, under a penalty of £50, besides bail to answer Mr. Williamson’s action of £1000 damages. ‘I then began,’ says Wesley, ‘to see into their design of spinning out time and doing nothing, and so plainly told the recorder, Sir, I will sign neither one bond, nor the other.’

After evening prayers, the tide serving, he left

Savannah with three other persons, no one attempting to hinder him, notwithstanding an order requiring all officers to prevent his going out of the province, and forbidding any person to assist him to do so. It seems probable that the magistrates were really glad to get rid of him.

His own graphic story may be read in the *Journal*, from which the following is extracted :

On December 2, as soon as evening prayers were over, about eight o'clock, the tide then serving, he says, 'I shook off the dust of my feet, and left Georgia, after having preached the gospel there, not as I ought, but as I was able, one year and nine months.' Early the next morning the little party—four in all—reached Purrysburg, and, failing to find a guide, set out an hour before sunrise. After walking two or three hours, they met with an old man, who led them into a small path, near which was a line of 'blazed' trees (trees marked by cutting off part of the bark), and by following these he assured them they might come to Port Royal in five or six hours. About eleven they came to a large swamp, in which they wandered for three hours ; then, finding another 'blaze,' they followed it till it divided into two. Following one of these through an almost impassable thicket, a mile beyond which it ended, they made through the thicket again, and traced the other 'blaze' till that also ended. It was now towards sunset, so, faint and weary, they sat down, having had no food all day, except the third of a gingerbread cake, which Wesley had carried in his pocket. They divided another third, reserving the rest till the morning, but they had met with no water all day. One of the

company, thrusting a stick into the ground, found the end of it moist, on which two of them fell to digging with their hands, and at about three feet depth found water. They thanked God, drank, and were refreshed, and after worship lay down close together and slept. The following morning they pursued their way, but as the woods grew thicker and thicker, they retraced their steps of the previous day. The day before, in the thickest part of the woods, Wesley, not knowing why, had broken many young trees as the little company walked along. These they now found helpful in guiding them through the thickest part of the wood, and between one and two they came to the house of the old man they left the day before. In the evening Wesley read prayers to a numerous French family, one of whom undertook on the following day to be their guide. They tramped from morning till sunset, when their guide confessed he knew not where they were. However, they pushed on until seven, when they came to a plantation, and the next evening, after many difficulties and delays, they landed on Port Royal Island.

On December 7, Wesley walked to Beaufort, and was joined the next day by Mr. Delamotte, with whom, on the day following, he took boat for Charlestown, which place, after a slow passage, by reason of contrary winds, and some conflict with hunger and cold, provisions falling short, he reached on the 13th. The following day he read prayers, by request, and was much refreshed, and likewise visited a dying man ; and on the 16th he parted with Mr. Charles Delamotte, from whom he had been but a few days

separated since October 14, 1735. On the 18th he was seized with a violent flux, but had strength to preach 'once more to this careless people, and a few *believed our report.*' On the 22nd he took his leave of America, 'though, if it please God, not for ever.'

Though suffering much on board, he applied himself to his work, beginning by instructing a negro lad in the principles of Christianity. He resolved to leave off 'living delicately,' and return to his old simplicity of diet, with the happy effect, that neither stomach nor head much complained of the motion of the ship.

Finding himself the victim of much fear of danger, though he knew not of what, he makes the following reflections : '1. That not one of these hours ought to pass out of my remembrance, till I attain another manner of spirit—a spirit equally willing to glorify God by life or by death. 2. That whoever is uneasy on any account (bodily pain alone excepted) carries in himself his own conviction that he is so far an unbeliever. Is he uneasy at the apprehension of death? Then he believeth not, that *to die is gain.* At any of the events of life? Then he hath not a firm belief, that *all things work together for his good.* And if he bring the matter more close, he will find, beside the general want of faith, every particular uneasiness is evidently owing to the want of some particular Christian temper.'

A few days later, being sorrowful and very heavy (though he could give no particular reason for it), and being also utterly unwilling to speak closely to any one on board, he feared this was the cause of his unaccountable heaviness, so began to instruct the

cabin-boy. Several times during the following days he went with a design to speak to the sailors, but could not, and wondered whether it were a prohibition from the good Spirit, or a temptation from the evil one.

During the voyage he finished his abridgment of the *Life of Monsieur de Renty*, on which he had been at work for some time. It was the first of a very large number of abridgments made and published by him, to which reference will afterwards be made. In this instance he reduced a volume of 358 pages to a pamphlet of 67. It was published in 1741, and passed through several editions.¹

He daily read and explained some passages of the Bible to the young negro, and to another of the company. Finding a young Frenchman who could converse with no one on board, he read and explained a chapter in the Testament also to him every morning.

He was still greatly exercised respecting his religious state, and in the fulness of his heart, he says, wrote these words:

‘By the most infallible of proofs, inward feeling, I am convinced—

‘1. Of unbelief; having no such faith in Christ as will prevent my heart being troubled; which it could not be, if I believed in God, and rightly believed also in Him.

‘2. Of pride, throughout my life past; inasmuch as I thought I had what I find I have not.

‘3. Of gross irrecollection; inasmuch as in a storm I cry to God every moment, in a calm not.

‘4. Of levity and luxuriancy of spirit; appearing by my speaking words not tending to edify, but most by my manner of speaking of my enemies.

¹ See *Wesley Bibliography*, No. 21. By Rev. R. Green. London, 1896.

'Lord, save, or I perish ! Save me—

' 1. By such a faith as implies peace in life and in death.

' 2. By such humility, as may fill my heart from this hour for ever, with a piercing uninterrupted sense, *Nihil est quod hactenus feci* [I have done nothing hitherto], having evidently built without a foundation.

' 3. By such a recollection as may cry to thee every moment, especially when all is calm ; give me faith or I die ; give me a lowly spirit ; otherwise *Mihi non sit suave vivere* [Let life be a burden to me].

' 4. By steadiness, seriousness, *σεμνότης*, sobriety of spirit, avoiding as fire every word that tendeth not to edifying, and never speaking of any who opposes me, or sin against God, without all my sins set in array before my face.'¹

It is impossible to understand Wesley's spiritual condition, or his views on the critical questions of the spiritual life, without pondering these overflowings of his heart. How easy is it to discern in them the earnest craving of his soul for rest, and how obvious it is that the knowledge of the way of peace he had as yet not found.

For some days he reflected much, he tells us, on that vain desire, which had pursued him for so many years, of being in solitude, in order to be a Christian. 'I have now,' he adds, 'thought I, solitude enough ; but am I, therefore, the nearer being a Christian ? Not if Jesus Christ be the model of Christianity. I doubt, indeed, I am much nearer that mystery of Satan, which some writers affect to call by that name. So near, that I had probably sunk wholly into it, had not the great mercy of God just now thrown me upon reading St. Cyprian's works. O my soul, come not

¹ *Journal*, Jan. 8, 1738.

thou into their secret! Stand thou in the good old paths.'

The voyagers encountered a heavy storm. All were shut close down, the sea breaking over the ship continually. He says, at first he was afraid, but cried to God and was strengthened, and lay down without fear. 'About midnight,' he adds, 'we were awakened by a confused noise of seas, and wind, and men's voices, the like to which I had never heard before. The sound of the sea, breaking over and against the sides of the ship, I could compare to nothing but large cannon or American thunder. The rebounding, starting, quivering motion of the ship, much resembled what is said of earthquakes. The captain was upon deck in an instant. But his men could not hear what he said. It blew a proper hurricane; which, beginning at south-west, then went west, north-west, north, and in a quarter of an hour, round by the east to the south-west point again. At the same time the sea running (as they term it) mountain high, and that from many different points at once, the ship would not obey the helm; nor, indeed, could the steersman, through the violent rain, see the compass. So he was forced to let her run before the wind, and in half an hour the stress of the storm was over.

'About noon the next day it ceased. But first I had resolved, God being my helper, not only to preach to all, but to apply the Word of God to every single soul in the ship; and if but one, yea, if not one of them will hear, I know "my labour is not in vain." I no sooner executed this resolution, than my spirit revived; so that from this day I had no more of that

fearfulness and heaviness, which before almost continually weighed me down.' ¹ He had evidently been in a state of mind typified by that of the raging, tossing sea.

Some ten days afterwards he says, very impressively, 'My mind was now full of thought, part of which I writ down as follows :

'I went to America, to convert the Indians ; but Oh ! who shall convert me ? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief ? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well ; nay, and believe myself, when no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, "To die is gain."

' "I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore !"'

The following deserves careful consideration : 'I think, verily, if the gospel be true, I am safe ; for I not only have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor ; I not only give my body to be burned, drowned, or whatever God shall appoint for me ; but I follow after charity (though not as I ought, yet as I can), if haply I may attain it. I *now* believe the gospel is true. I show my faith by my works, by staking my all upon it. I would do so again and again a thousand times, if the choice were still to make. Whoever sees me sees I would be a Christian. Therefore "are my ways not like other men's ways." Therefore I have been, I am, I am content to be, "a byword, a proverb of reproach."'²

How pure ! how simple ! how ingenuous ! Most

¹ *Journal*.

² *Ibid*.

truly, whoever saw him must have seen that he 'would be a Christian.' It was not only his one aim, his one desire; but it was his supreme object of pursuit—a pursuit that lacked neither fervour nor continuity. But was he not a Christian? Who could presume to think himself a Christian, if he could not? Yet, while he believed the gospel was true, there was a truth in that gospel which he did not clearly discern at present, and therefore he could not believe it, or his joy would have been full. A child may be the son of a king, and not know it. But Wesley will see it in time, and will believe it; and it will be to him as life from the dead. He will know then, without reasoning, whether or not he is a partaker of the gospel salvation. He will know it by what he called, 'the most infallible of proofs, inward feeling.'

We have, however, interrupted him. He had other thoughts. He goes on to say, 'But in a storm I think, "What if the gospel be not true?" Then thou art of all men most foolish. For what hast thou given thy goods, thy ease, thy friends, thy reputation, thy country, thy life? For what art thou wandering over the face of the earth? A dream, a cunningly devised fable? Oh, who will deliver me from this fear of death! What shall I do? Where shall I fly from it? Should I fight against it by thinking, or by not thinking of it? A wise man advised me some time since, "Be still, and go on." Perhaps this is best, to look upon it as my cross; when it comes, to let it humble me, and quicken all my good resolutions, especially that of praying without ceasing; and at other times to take no thought about it, but quietly to go on in the work of the Lord.'

But these were not his only reflections. He reviews the course of theological thought through which he has passed—his early theological career. He then closely considers his own personal spiritual state—his religious experience ; and on these interesting subjects records his views in a private paper, before the voyage was ended. Next, he reflects on his work in Georgia, endeavouring to estimate the results of his missionary labour. His views on this subject he set down at a later period.

On the first of these topics he writes :—

‘ January 25.—For many years I have been tossed about by various winds of doctrine. I asked long ago, *What must I do to be saved?* The Scripture answered, Keep the Commandments, believe, hope, love. Follow after these tempers till thou hast fully attained, that is, till death ; by all those outward works and means which God hath appointed ; by walking as Christ walked. 2. I was early warned against laying, as the Papists do, too much stress on outward works, or on a faith without works ; which, as it does not include, so it will never lead to true hope or charity. Nor am I sensible that, to this hour, I have laid too much stress on either. Having from the very beginning valued both faith and the means of grace, and good works, not on their own account, but, as believing God, who had appointed them, would by them bring me in due time to “the mind that was in Christ.” 3. But before God’s time was come I fell among some Lutheran and Calvinist authors, who magnified faith to such an amazing size, that it hid all the rest of the commandments. I did not then see that this was the natural effect of their overgrown fear of Popery, being so terrified with the cry of merit and good works, that they plunged at once into the other extreme. In this labyrinth I was utterly lost, not being able to find out what the error was, nor yet to reconcile this uncouth hypothesis, either with Scripture or

common sense. 4. The English writers, such as Bishop Beveridge, Bishop Taylor, and Mr. Nelson, a little relieved me from these well-meaning, wrong-headed Germans. Their accounts of Christianity, I could easily see to be, in the main, consistent both with reason and Scripture. Only when they interpreted Scripture in different ways, I was often much at a loss. And again there was one thing much insisted on in Scripture—the unity of the Church, which none of them, I thought, clearly explained. 5. But it was not long before Providence brought me to those who showed me a sure rule of interpreting Scripture; viz. *Consensus veterum: Quod ab omnibus, quod ubique, quod semper creditum*. At the same time they sufficiently insisted upon a due regard to the one Church at all times and in all places. Nor was it long before I bent the bow too far the other way: (1) By making antiquity a co-ordinate rather than subordinate rule with Scripture. (2) By admitting several doubtful writings, as undoubted evidences of antiquity. (3) By extending antiquity too far, even to the middle or end of the fourth century. (4) By believing more practices to have been universal in the ancient Church than ever were so. (5) By not considering that the most of those decrees of a provincial synod could bind only that province, and the decrees of a general synod only those provinces whose representatives met therein. (6) By not considering that the most of those decrees were adapted to particular times and occasions, and, consequently, when those occasions ceased, must cease to bind even those provinces.

‘6. These considerations insensibly stole upon me as I grew acquainted with the Mystic writers, whose noble descriptions of union with God and internal religion made everything else appear mean, flat, and insipid. But in truth they made good works appear so too; yea, and faith itself, and what not? These gave me an entire new view of religion, nothing like any I had before. But alas! it was nothing like that religion which Christ and His Apostles lived and taught. I had a plenary dispensation from all the

commands of God. The form was thus : Love is all ; all the commands beside are only means of love—you must choose those which you feel are means to you, and use them as long as they are so. Thus were all the bands burst at once. And though I could never fully come into this, nor contentedly omit what God enjoined, yet, I know not how, I fluctuated between obedience and disobedience. I had no heart, no vigour, no zeal in obeying ; continually doubting whether I was right or wrong, and never out of perplexities and entanglements. Nor can I at this hour give a distinct account, how, or when, I came a little back toward the right way ; only my present sense is this—all the other enemies of Christianity are triflers. The Mystics are the most dangerous of its enemies. They stab it in the vitals, and its most serious professors are most likely to fall by them. May I praise Him who hath snatched me out of this fire likewise, by warning all others, that it is set on fire of hell.’¹

He afterwards acknowledged that the censure here passed upon the Mystics is too severe.

‘It is now,’ he said, ‘two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learnt myself meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected), that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.’² *I am not mad*, though I thus speak, but *I speak the words of truth and soberness* : if haply some of those who still dream may awake, and see that as I am, so are they. Are they read in philosophy? So was I. In antient or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed in the science of divinity? I too have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual things? The very same could I do. Are they pienteous in alms?

¹ Moore, i. 342.

² In 1771-74 he published his *Collected Works*, and made the following comment : ‘I am not sure of this.’

Behold, I gave all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour as well as their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation, ease, country. I have put my life in my hand, wandering into strange lands; I have given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or whatsoever God shall please to bring upon me. But does all this (be it more or less, it matters not) make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did, or can, *know, say, give, do, or suffer*, justify me in His sight? Yea, or the constant use of all the means of grace? (which, nevertheless, is meet, right, and our bounden duty). Or that I know nothing of myself; that I am, as touching outward, moral righteousness, blameless? Or (to come closer yet) the having a rational conviction of all the truths of Christianity? Does all this give me a claim to the holy, heavenly, divine character of a Christian? If the oracles of God are true, if we are still to abide by "the law and testimony," all these things, though when ennobled by faith in Christ,¹ they are holy, and just, and good, yet without it are "dung and dross," meet only to be purged away by the "fire that never shall be quenched."

'This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth, that I "am fallen short of the glory of God;" that my whole heart is "altogether corrupt and abominable," and consequently my whole life, seeing it cannot be, that an "evil tree" should "bring forth good fruit." That "alienated" as I am "from the life of God," I am "a child of wrath,"² an heir of hell: That my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God, so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins, which "are more in number than the hairs of my head," that the most specious of them need an

¹ 'I had even then the faith of a *servant*, though not that of a *son*.'

² 'I believe not.'

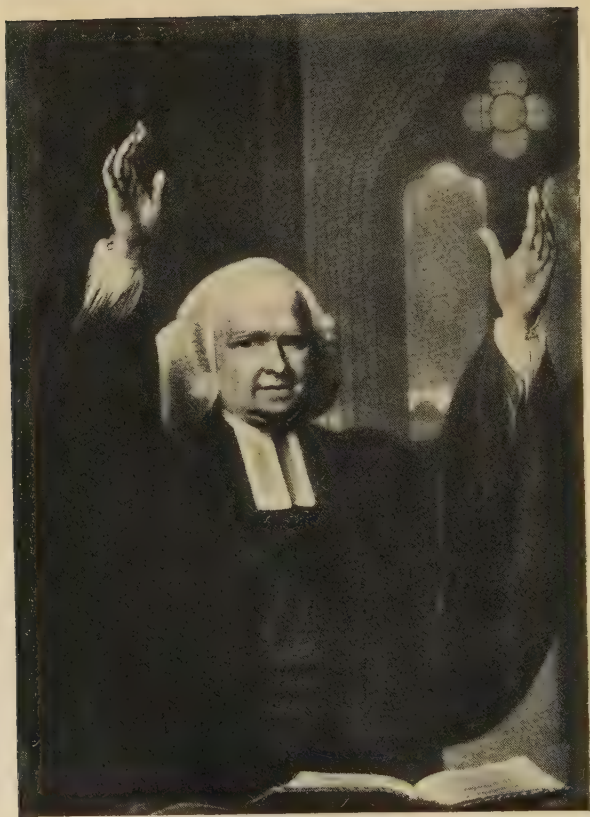
atonement themselves : That "having the sentence of death" in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that of being justified freely "through the redemption that is in Jesus : " I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and be found in Him, "not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. iii. 9). If it be said, that I have faith (for many such things have I heard from many miserable comforters), I answer, so have the devils—a sort of a faith ; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. So the Apostles had even at Cana in Galilee, when Jesus first "manifested forth his glory ; " even then, they in a sort "believed on Him," but they had not then "the faith that overcometh the world." The faith I want is¹ "A sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God." I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans : That faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out, "I live not ; but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it (though many imagine they have it, who have it not) ; for whosoever hath it is "freed from sin ; " the whole "body of sin is destroyed" in him : he is freed from fear, "having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." And he is freed from doubt, "having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him, which Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God."'²

The last sentences in these extracts show most

¹ 'The faith of a son.'

² Moore, i. 345 ; *Journal*, February 1, 1738. See also : Watson's *Life of Wesley*, p. 62.

plainly that Wesley had made considerable spiritual progress since he left England, and that he was 'not far from the kingdom of God.' He had learned that he could not hope for forgiveness on the ground of any works that he had done, or might do. Most significant are the words, 'Having the sentence of death in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that of being justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus;' and again, 'The faith that I *want* is a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God.' How marked a change from the words used months (October 14, 1735) before, 'Our end in leaving our native country was . . . to save our souls.' The sinner does not save himself—'not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us.' That which Wesley longed for was 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby' he could 'cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit Himself bearing witness with' his 'spirit that he was a child of God:' whereas he formerly sought to establish the witness of his own spirit. These are two distinct testimonies, on which he subsequently wrote and spoke very plainly, distinguishing them with clearness and precision. The day would come when he would not have occasion to prove to himself, by processes of reasoning, that he was a child of God; but when he would be able in holy joyfulness to say, 'an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.' That day was drawing near, but it was not yet.



GEORGE WHITEFIELD PREACHING.

From an old print.

CHAPTER V

THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

AFTER more tossings and threatenings of trouble, on Sunday, January 29, they came safely into the Downs; and early on Wednesday morning, February 1, Wesley landed at Deal. There he learned that, the day before, his friend Whitefield had sailed for Savannah, neither knowing anything of the other. Yes; Whitefield had begun his mighty and extraordinary ministry, his heart almost bursting with the Gospel joy, which his friend was labouring to find, and in his exuberant gladness was already pouring out his life in service as happy as it was wondrous. He describes thus his last Sabbath before he set sail. 'Sunday, January 29.—Went on board early in the morning, read prayers, and preached to the soldiers, and visited the sick; then returned on shore, and hastened with a troop of pious friends [who had gathered from far to bid him farewell] to Shroulden [Sholden] church, about a mile and half distant from Deal, where I preached to a thronged and weeping congregation. In the afternoon I preached at Upper Deal church, which was quite crowded, and many went away for want of room; some stood on the leads of the church on the outside, and looked in at the top windows, and

all seemed eager to hear the Word. May the Lord make them doers of it! In the evening I was obliged to divide my hearers into four companies, and was enabled to expound to them from six till ten. Lord, keep me from being weary of, or in, well-doing.'¹ A specimen of the life-consuming labours of this extraordinary man.

Thus were the men, who were afterwards to become so remarkable in the history of the Church of God in England, linked together in the benevolent colonizing experiment and missionary effort on the distant shores of America.

Wesley landed at Deal at four o'clock in the morning of February 1, 1738, after an absence from England of rather more than two years. He had made very great, if unconscious, progress in spiritual knowledge during that time. His zeal, so far from suffering abatement by the things he had suffered, had been kindled to a yet greater intensity. On the morning of his arrival he read prayers and explained a portion of Scripture to a large company at the inn. Reaching Faversham, he read prayers and expounded the second lesson to a few, 'called Christians, but more savage in their behaviour,' he was compelled to observe, 'than the wildest Indians' he had met with. He visited the home of his friend Delamotte, at Blendon, receiving a very hearty welcome. On the 3rd he reached London. In addition to the many subjects which he had so carefully pondered during his voyage, he, as might have been expected, thoughtfully reviewed the results of his residence and work in America. He had more than once deplored his

¹ *Journal.*

failure to accomplish his purpose of becoming a missionary to the Indians; and he could hardly look upon his labours amongst the English with perfect satisfaction. But all was not failure; and he was enabled to express his thankfulness that he had been carried into that strange land, contrary to all his preceding resolution, and that though the chief design of his going did not take effect—the preaching of the Gospel to the native tribes of North America—yet he had derived much personal profit; he had been humbled and proved; he had learned to *beware of men*; to know assuredly that if in all our ways we acknowledge God, He will, where reason fails, direct our path ‘by lot or by other means.’ He was also delivered from the fear of the sea, which he had dreaded from his youth. It had been given to him to know many servants of God, particularly those of the Church of Herrnhut. By his studies in the German, Spanish, and Italian languages his way had been opened to the writings of these tongues. Moreover, all in Georgia had heard the Word of God, which some had believed, and had begun to run well; and a few steps had been taken towards the preaching of the Gospel to the African and American heathen. Many children had learned how they ought to serve God, and to be useful to their neighbours. Besides, they whom it most concerned had now an opportunity, through his reports, of knowing the true state of the infant colony, and so the firm foundation of peace and happiness might be laid for many following generations.¹ These were not inconsiderable fruits of his expedition.

¹ *Journal*, February 3, 1738.

But very real results were traceable by others. Whitefield reached Savannah on May 7. On June 2 his friend Delamotte left for England. 'The good people,' Whitefield says, 'lamented the loss of him, and went to the water-side to take a last farewell, and good reason they had to do so; for he had been indefatigable in feeding Christ's lambs with the sincere milk of the Word, and many of them (blessed be God) have grown thereby. Surely I must labour most heartily, since I come after such worthy predecessors. The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America, under God, is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people; and he has laid such a foundation, that I hope neither men nor devils will ever be able to shake. Oh, that I may follow him as he has Christ.'¹

Many of the incidents in Wesley's life during his missionary career are of thrilling interest, but to the biographer the spiritual struggle through part of which he passed, with its hidden subtle forces, must be held to be of primary import. It was a silent formative process, by which this great servant of God was being prepared for his supreme work, that of an active evangelization throughout the British Isles. That process must be carefully traced, if we would understand Wesley and his place in the Church's history. He has recorded it with some minuteness, as we have seen. It is only necessary here to add that his high church views have received a very severe shock, and that he has passed, to a large degree, from under their dominance to that of the Moravian teaching. The Oxford Don, who,

¹ Whitefield's *Journal*, June 2, 1738.

keeping up the traditions of his childhood, would do nothing 'without a reason,' has learned in great exigencies of his life to decide his course by *lot*!

'Wesley's voyages to and fro, and the months of his stay in the colony, were incidentally important in bringing him within the circle of the Moravian influence. It was in that circle that the new and strange idea first met him of a Christianity more elevated and excellent than his own. One or two of the Moravian ministers were—and he felt it—far advanced in knowledge and experience beyond his own rate of attainment. At Oxford he had found himself stepping forward always in front of those around him. But on board the ship on which he crossed the Atlantic, and afterwards in the colony, he met with men who, without assuming a tone of arrogance towards him, spoke to him as to a novice, and who, in the power of truth, brought his conscience to a stand by questions which, while he admitted the pertinence of them, he could not answer with any satisfaction to himself. Thus it was that he returned to England in a state of spiritual discomfort and destitution. He had been stripped of that overweening religiousness upon which, as its basis, his ascetic egotism had hitherto rested. He rejoined his friends in a mood to ask and receive guidance, rather than to afford it.' ¹

Wesley immediately begins to preach in the London churches. But his experience on the first Sabbath was indicative of what awaited him. He was desired to preach at St. John the Evangelist's. He did so, on the words, 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creature,' and was afterwards informed that many of the best of the parish were so offended that he was not to preach there any more. He now

¹ *Wesley and Methodism.* By Isaac Taylor, p. 31.

visited many of his old friends and relations, to his great joy and comfort.

Wesley marks Tuesday, February 7, as 'a day much to be remembered,' for on this day he met Peter Böhler, at the house of Mr. Weynanz (or Weinantz), a Dutch merchant, Wesley delivering to him a letter addressed to Zinzendorf, which he had brought from John Toltschig, a Moravian minister, whose acquaintance Wesley had formed in Georgia.¹ Böhler was a chosen agent of God in leading him to the light he was then seeking. With two other representatives of the Moravian Church, Böhler had just arrived in England, and Wesley procured for them lodgings near Mr. Hutton's, where he himself was staying ; and he lost no opportunity, he tells us, of conversing with them while he remained in London. He waited on the Georgian Trustees with his report of the colony, which he had reason to believe was not acceptable to many of them, as it differed greatly from reports they had generally received. He then, in company with Böhler, set out for Oxford, where they were received by the only one remaining there, he says, of many who, at his embarking for America, were used to *take sweet counsel together* and rejoice in *bearing the reproach of Christ*. While in Oxford they were often the objects of ridicule and derisive laughter. Böhler one day perceiving that Wesley was troubled by it on his account, said, with a smile, 'My brother, it does not even stick to our clothes.' They together visited his friend Gambold, and found him 'recovered from his mystic delusion, and convinced that Paul was a

¹ *Memorials of Böhler*. By J. P. Lockwood. London, 1868.

better writer than either Tauler or Behmen.' All this time he conversed much with Böhler, whom he confesses he did not understand, and especially when he said, *Mi frater, mi frater, excoquenda est ista tua philosophia*. 'My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away.' Latin was the medium of intercourse, Böhler not understanding English. Böhler, writing to Zinzendorf, says, 'I travelled with the two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, from London to Oxford. The elder, John, is a good-natured man. He knew that he did not properly believe in the Saviour, and was willing to be taught.' He now returned to London; and, after meeting his mother once more, set out again to Oxford, called thither by the report that his brother was dying. On his way he spoke plainly to several well-wishers to religion, and in the evening to the servants and strangers at the inn. He then resolves, with regard to his own conduct:

'1. To use absolute openness and unreserve, with all I should converse with.

'2. To labour after continual seriousness, not willingly indulging myself in any the least levity of behaviour, or in laughter, no, not for a moment.

'3. To speak no word which does not tend to the glory of God; in particular, not to talk of worldly things. Others may, nay must. But what is that to thee? and

'4. To take no pleasure which does not tend to the glory of God; thanking God every moment for all I do take, and therefore rejecting every sort and degree of it which I feel I cannot so thank Him in and for.'

He found his brother with Peter Böhler, by

whom during a quiet walk in the evening of the following day he was 'convinced of unbelief, of the want of *that faith whereby alone we are saved.*' Böhler says, 'I took a walk with the elder Wesley, and asked him about his spiritual state. He told me that he sometimes felt certain of his salvation, but sometimes he had many doubts ; that he could only say this, "If what stands in the Bible be true, then I am saved." Thereupon I spoke with him very fully, and earnestly besought him to go to the opened fountain, and not to mar the efficacy of free grace by his unbelief.' Immediately, he says, it struck into his mind to leave off preaching, for how could he preach to others who had not faith himself! Appealing to Böhler, he received for answer, 'By no means : preach faith *till* you have it, and then, *because* you have it, you will preach it.' 'Accordingly, Mon., Mar. 6, I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. The first person to whom I offered *Salvation by Faith alone*, was a prisoner under sentence of death. His name was Clifford. Peter Böhler had many times desired me to speak to him before. But I could not prevail on myself so to do ; being still, as I had been many years, a zealous asserter of the impossibility of a death-bed repentance.' This is one of the critical hours in Wesley's life. What a revelation his words contain ! He had never before preached *salvation by faith alone* ! He had never before believed salvation was thus obtainable ! What light is here thrown upon his past efforts ! He might now say truly, 'The faith I want is—this.'

Böhler returned to London, and Wesley set out

to visit his friend Clayton at Manchester, with Mr. Kinchin, Fellow of Corpus Christi, and Mr. Fox, late a prisoner in the city prison. They fully determined to lose no opportunity of awakening, instructing, or exhorting any whom they might meet in their journey ; but, neglecting their duty in Birmingham, they were 'reproved by a severe shower of hail.' In the evenings, at the inns where they stayed, they held family prayer, with reading and exposition of the Scriptures, with all who were willing to join. On returning to Oxford, he met Peter Böhler again, who now amazed him more and more by the accounts which he gave of the holiness and happiness attending living faith. He then began again the examination of the Greek Testament, resolved to abide by the law and the testimony, and being confident he would hereby be taught whether this doctrine was of God.

He preached at Whitham on 'the new creature,' and went in the evening to a society in Oxford, where, as his manner there was at all the societies, after using a collect or two and the Lord's Prayer, he expounded a chapter in the New Testament, concluding with three or four more collects and a psalm. At the Castle, after reading prayers and preaching, he and his companion Kinchin prayed with a condemned criminal, 'first in several forms of prayer, and then in such words as were given us in that hour.' 'The prisoner kneeled down in much heaviness and confusion, having no rest in his bones by reason of his sins.' After a space he rose up, and eagerly said, 'I am now ready to die. I know Christ has taken away my sins, and there is no more condemnation for me.' The same composed cheerfulness

he showed when he was carried to execution ; and in his last moments he was the same, enjoying a perfect peace, in confidence that he was 'accepted in the beloved.' This arrests Wesley's attention. It was a case in point for him ; a case of sudden conviction of sin, followed by conviction of pardon, and accompanied even in that solemn hour with the most assured peace and joy. But Wesley could not say, with the poor criminal for whom he had prayed, 'I know that Jesus Christ has taken away my sins.' He was, however, approaching the happy hour ! At another society, he says his heart was so full that he could not confine himself to the forms of prayer generally in use ; and he resolved in future to pray indifferently, with a form or without, as should seem suitable.

Six days after, on Easter Day, April 2, he preached in the college chapel, and again in the afternoon at the Castle, and at Carfax ; and he wrote, 'I see the promise, but afar off ;' and, judging it to be better for him to wait for its fulfilment in silence and retirement, he withdrew, at his friend Kinchin's desire, to Dummer, in Hampshire. But in a few days he was summoned to London, where he met Böhler again ; and confessed he had now no objection to what he said of the *nature* of faith, that, in the words of the Homily, it was 'a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.' But he could not comprehend what was said of an *instantaneous work*. Searching the Scriptures, however, he found, to his utter astonishment, scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions. His only retreat now was,

‘Thus it was in the first ages of Christianity, but what is the evidence that God works in the same manner now?’ But on the following day he was beaten out of this by the concurring evidence of several living witnesses, who testified God had thus wrought in them, giving them in a moment such a faith in the blood of His Son as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness.

The following interesting account of this incident is given by Böhler :—

‘I took four of my English brethren to John Wesley . . . that they might relate their experience to him, how the Saviour so soon and so mightily has compassion, and accepts the sinner. They told, one after another, what had been wrought in them; Wolff especially, in whom the change was quite recent, spoke very heartily, mightily, and in confidence of his faith. John Wesley and those that were with him were as if thunderstruck at these narrations. I asked John Wesley what he then believed. He said four examples were not enough to prove the thing. To satisfy his objections, I replied, I would bring eight more here in London. After a short time he stood up, and said, “We will sing that hymn, *Hier legt mein Sinn sich vor dir nieder*” [By C. F. Richter]:

‘My soul before Thee prostrate lies,
To Thee her source my spirit flies,
My wants I mourn, my chains I see:
O, let Thy presence set me free!

‘During the singing of the Moravian version,’ Böhler continues, ‘he often wiped his eyes. Immediately after he took me alone into his own room, and declared, “that he was now satisfied of what I said of faith, and that he would not question any more about it; that he was clearly convinced of the want of it; but how could he help himself,

and how could he obtain such faith? He was a man that had not sinned so grossly as other people." I replied that it was sin enough that he did not believe on the Saviour: he should not depart from the door of the Saviour until He helped him. I was very much pressed to pray with him; therefore I called upon the bleeding name of the Saviour to have compassion on this sinner. . . . Afterwards he told me what contradictions he had met with from the pious clergy with whom he had taken counsel, because he had by opportunity told them what he knew, and what he still wanted; but he was not concerned at it. He asked me, moreover, what he should do at this time, whether he should tell all the people his present state or not? I replied that in this I could give him no rule; that he might do what the Saviour might teach him; that he must not set the faith as it is in Jesus so far from him, but believe that it might be nearer; that Jesus' heart still stands open, and that His mercy towards him is great. He wept heartily and bitterly, as I spoke to him on this matter, and [insisted that] I must pray with him. I can say of him, he is truly a poor sinner, and has a contrite heart, hungering after a better righteousness than that he has till now possessed.

'In the evening he preached from 1 Cor. i. 23: "But we preach Christ crucified," etc. He had above four thousand hearers, and spoke upon this subject until the congregation was astonished, because no one had ever heard such things from him. His first words were, "I hold myself from my very heart unworthy to preach the crucified Jesus."'¹

'Here,' Wesley says, 'ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, Lord, help Thou my unbelief.' This was for him a time of great spiritual conflict. He was passing through a strait gate. Since his intercourse with the Moravians he had been gradually led to see that he had been putting too

¹ *Memorials of Peter Böhler*. Lockwood.

much confidence in his strict attention to the performances of religion. In assigning to these their proper place and proportion there is no need to minify their importance. Wesley's danger was in their exaggeration. One striking feature of his training hitherto had been the reduction of his entire conduct to rule ; so that the individual hours of the day, and even separate portions of the same hour, had each its allotted task. In his pocket-diary, kept with the greatest precision for many years, the occupation even of minutes is recorded. His whole conduct, his words, his very thoughts were under control, and were regulated by laws, which he was strict to observe, and every departure from which gave him pain.

Never was a man more resolute in this process of self-control and self-discipline. He had long accustomed himself to frequent interrogations as to his fidelity. Precise questions were drawn up and faithfully proposed at stated times, of which examples have been given. He was a most rigid 'Methodist' even before that name, as a stigma, was attached to him. He was not without light and comfort, but he was gradually being led to see that he was far from the perfect light and rest of the gospel. That light, however, was dawning upon him. Whether it must be said that he was or was not a true Christian is in great part a question of definition. How much is included in being a Christian? He had faith, but it was not the perfect faith. It was not the faith that brings assurance. He was a good man. He was in many respects a very saint, a pattern to believers ; but, withal, he had not yet attained. He was in the

light, but it was not the perfect day. He had rest, but it was unsettled, unassured. There was yet a further, a happier stage. 'I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it. For whosoever hath it is freed from fear, having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. And he is freed from doubt, having the love of God shed abroad in his heart.'

How shall it be explained that Wesley, after so many years of earnest seeking, failed to find the gospel salvation? He had been in the ministry more than twelve years. He was diligent in the discharge of every duty; he fasted and prayed and gave alms; he attended with scrupulous care on all the means of grace, including a frequent attendance at the Lord's table; he laboured assiduously, even to the utmost of his strength, for the welfare of others. Yet he had not found the peace of the gospel. How was this? Would not his own answer be, *Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law* (Rom. ix. 31, 32, R.V.).

He now became persuaded that this faith is the gift of God, and that God would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it; and he resolved 'by the grace of God to seek it unto the end, (1) By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon my own works or righteousness, on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up.' (How true! This confession is exceedingly impressive.) '(2) By adding to the constant use of all the other

means' of grace a continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving grace, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for *me*, a trust in Him as *my* Christ, as *my* sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.'

It is needful to give careful attention to these details in Wesley's spiritual struggle, for without regard being paid to them, neither he nor his future work can be understood. After a time he looked back, as his followers do now, to one supreme and critical hour of his life; an hour for which years of training prepared him, an hour which in his religious history is invested with a significance which it would be foolish to ignore, and almost as foolish to diminish. The period now under consideration is an integral and important part of the preparation for that hour. He was being taught, and by efficient, if humble teachers. On many subjects he needed no tutor, he himself could teach. But here he is a learner. How often has a child of the kingdom led the full-grown seeker to its gates!

He again hesitated to teach, but was instructed not to hide in the earth the talent God had given him. Consequently he spoke clearly and fully at Blendon to Mr. Delamotte's family of the nature and fruits of faith. Mr. Broughton and his brother were there. The former objected, 'He could never think that I had not faith, who had done and suffered such things.' In after years Wesley added, 'He was in the right. I certainly then had the faith of a servant, though not the faith of a son.' His brother was very angry, and told him he did not know what mischief he had done by talking thus. Wesley adds, 'And,

indeed, it did please God then to kindle a fire which I trust shall never be extinguished.'

He was again urged by Böhler not to stop short of the grace of God. At Gerrard's Cross he plainly declared the faith as it is in Jesus; as he did the next day to a young man he overtook on the road, and in the evening to his friends at Oxford. In the day or two following he was much confirmed in the truth by the experiences of two of his college friends, who witnessed that God *can*, if He *does* not always, give that faith whereof cometh salvation in a moment, as lightning fallen from heaven.

Hastening to London on account of his brother's health, he found him better as to his health than he expected, but strongly averse to what he called 'the New Faith.'

Wesley writes, 'On May 1 [1738] our little society began, which afterwards met in Fetter Lane.' It has usually been supposed that they met in Neville's Court, in an old dingy chapel probably erected in the days of Charles II. This was the first home of the Methodists in London, and around it many interesting incidents connected with early Methodism cluster. It was at this place that Lord and Lady Huntingdon first attended the society's meetings; and Sir John Phillips and Sir John Thorold were awakened here, and became members of the Fetter Lane Society. The little society named by Wesley has been erroneously called a Moravian Society.¹ It is true that its rules² were drawn up in harmony with the

¹ Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, i. 195.

² The following is the first draft of the rules, as given by Wesley :
1. That we will meet together once a week to confess our



FASHIONABLE ATTIRE IN WESLEY'S TIME.

1, 2.—Figure Heads.

3.—Fashionable attire against which Wesley preached in his Sermon on Dress.

advice of Peter Böhler. But Wesley had already had experience in the formation of societies. It was a Church of England Society; one added to the many religious societies then existing in London and elsewhere. It so continued until a Moravian teacher, Molther, spread his peculiar views amongst the members, thus leading to Wesley's separation from it, to which future reference will be made. Whitefield, a year after the above date, records in his Journal: 'Sun., May 20: Went with our brethren of Fetter Lane Society to St. Paul's, and received the holy

faults one to another, and pray one for another, that we may be healed.

2. That the persons so meeting be divided into several bands or little companies, none of them consisting of fewer than five, or more than ten persons.

3. That every one in order speak as freely, plainly, and concisely as he can the real state of his heart, with his several temptations and deliverances since the last time of meeting.

4. That all the bands have a conference at eight every Wednesday evening, begun and ended with singing and prayer.

5. That any who desire to be admitted into this society be asked, What are your reasons for desiring this? Will you be entirely open, using no kind of reserve? Have you any objection to any of our orders? (Which may then be read.)

6. That when any new member is proposed, every one present speak clearly and freely whatever objection he has to him.

7. That those against whom no reasonable objection appears, be, in order for their trial, formed into one or more distinct bands, and some person agreed on to assist them.

8. That after two month's trial, if no objection then appear, they may be admitted into the society.

9. That every, fourth Saturday be observed as a day of general intercession.

10. That on the Saturday seven-night following be a general love-feast, from seven till ten in the evening.

11. That no particular member be allowed to act in anything contrary to any order of the society; and that if any persons after being thrice admonished do not conform thereto, they be not any longer esteemed as members.

Sacrament, as a testimony that we adhered to the Church of England.' Three weeks afterwards, Charles Wesley writes, 'Bro. Hall proposed expelling Shaw and Wolf. We consented *nem. con.* that their names should be erased out of the Society-book, because they disowned themselves members of the Church of England.'

It is an interesting fact that Wesley marks the formation of this society as the beginning of the present-day Methodism. In his *Short History of the People called Methodists* he says, 'On Monday, May 1, 1738, our little society began in London. But it may be observed, the first rise of Methodism, so called, was in November, 1729, when four of us met together in Oxford; the second was at Savannah,¹ in April, 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at my house; the last was in London, on this day, when forty or fifty of us agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening, in order to a free conversation, begun and ended with singing and prayer. In all our steps we were greatly assisted by the advice and exhortations of Peter Böhler, an excellent young man, belonging to the society commonly called Moravians.' It is observable that here he distinguishes between 'Methodism, so called' and the 'society commonly called Moravian.' Future reference will be made to this society.²

¹ 'I now advised the serious part of the congregation to join themselves into a sort of little society, and to meet once or twice a week, in order to instruct, exhort, and reprove one another. And out of these I selected a smaller number for a more intimate union with each other; in order to which I met them together at my house every Sunday in the afternoon.'—*Works*, xiii. 271.

² Hutton says, 'In June, 1740, he [Wesley] formed his Foundery

On May 3 Peter Böhler had a long conversation with Charles Wesley, when, John says, 'It pleased God to open his eyes so that he also saw clearly what was the nature of that one, true, living Faith, whereby alone, through grace, we are saved.' On the following day Böhler left London for Carolina, and Wesley writes, 'O what a work has God begun, since his coming into England! Such an one as shall never come to an end, till heaven and earth pass away.'¹

Preaching 'free salvation by faith in the blood of Christ' in several churches in London, Wesley is apprized at almost all that he can preach there no more. He records that Rev. G. Stonehouse, Vicar of Islington, was convinced of the truth as it is in Jesus. For some days he was sorrowful and very heavy, unable to read or meditate, to sing or pray, or do anything; but was somewhat revived by a tender and affectionate letter from his friend Böhler, urging him not to delay to believe in '*your* Jesus Christ;'

Society in opposition to the one which met at Fetter Lane, and which had *become* a Moravian Society,'—*Memoirs*, p. 54.

¹ 'Böhler deserves to be had in remembrance by the Methodist Church, on account of the exceeding great and beneficial influence which he exerted on Wesley at the most critical part of his life. This good man was greatly honoured in his ministry during his visits to England. His attainments were more than respectable. He could expound the psalms in Hebrew, to the delight of the sons of Abraham; he wrote a good Latin style, and conversed with ease in that language. He was acquainted with Arabic, and was conversant with other languages then used by scholars, and was known at the University as "the learned Peter Böhler." He was a man of great labour, of purity and beauty of spirit, modest and wise in counsel. After much toil and suffering in the service of Christ and His Church, this honoured Bishop of the *Unitas Fratrum* fell asleep on April 27, 1775, in the 63rd year of his age. He was interred in the cemetery attached to Lindsey House, Chelsea.'—Lockwood. *Memorials of Peter Böhler*.

declaring 'how great, how inexpressible, how unexhausted is His love. Surely He is now ready to help ; and nothing can offend Him but our unbelief.'

On Monday, May 19, Wesley makes the following entry in his Journal :—' My brother had a second attack of his pleurisy. A few of us spent Saturday night in prayer. The next day being Whit Sunday, after hearing Dr. Heylin preach a truly Christian sermon (on *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost ;* "and so," said he, "may all you be, if not it is your own fault"), and assisting him at the Holy Communion (his curate being taken ill in the church), I received the surprising news that my brother had found rest to his soul. His bodily strength also returned from that hour. *Who is so great a God as our God?*'

His heaviness and sorrow of heart returning, he breaks forth in the following passionate words in a letter to a friend :—

'I feel what you say (though not enough) ; for I am under the same condemnation. I see that the whole law of God is holy, just, and good. I know every thought, every temper of my soul ought to bear God's image and superscription. But how am I fallen from the glory of God ! I feel that I am *sold under sin*. I know that I too deserve nothing but wrath, being full of all abominations ; and having no good thing in me to atone for them, or to remove the wrath of God. All my works, all my righteousness, need an atonement for themselves. So that my mouth is stopped. I have nothing to plead. God is holy ; I am unholy. God is a consuming fire ; I am altogether a sinner, meet to be consumed.

'Yet I hear a voice (and is it not the voice of

God ?) saying, *Believe and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth is passed from death unto life. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

‘O let no one deceive us with vain words, as if we had already attained this faith! By its fruits ye shall know. Do we already feel *peace with God and joy in the Holy Ghost*? Does His Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God? Alas! with mine He does not.’

These were among his last words before the memorable change took place. They show most plainly that there was one definite step which he had not yet taken, though he longed to take it—one state which he had not entered, although his utmost desire was to enter. But the gate is open to admit him to that realm of peace and joy whither he would be; and his foot is lifted to take the final step and to enter. It is right that he should in his own words declare what took place on that momentous Wednesday, May 24, 1738. After a review of his life from his tenth year, he writes:—

‘I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words: *There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature* (2 Pet. i. 4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on these words, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*. In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul’s. The anthem was, “Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may

abide it? For there is mercy with Thee; therefore Thou shalt be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins."

'In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society [then meeting in Trinity Hall]¹ in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans.² About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.³

'I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "This cannot be Faith; for where is thy joy?" Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation: But, that as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of His own will.'

He adds, 'After my return home [to Mr. Bray's, in Little Britain, near Trinity Hall], I was much buffeted with

¹ Respecting the name and previous history of Trinity Hall, see *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. iii. p. 246. In the autumn of this year Wesley says he 'spoke the truth in love at a society in Aldersgate Street.' It is not a little surprising that a place of so great interest does not appear to be mentioned again in all Wesley's writings.

² It will presently be seen how highly Luther's teaching on faith and justification was prized; and subsequently, Wesley's severer judgment upon the great Reformer's writings will appear.

³ Henceforth this present assurance of reconciliation with God, assurance of forgiveness, of actual salvation, became his central theme. He proclaimed it, as on the housetop, to be the privilege of all.

temptations : but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He sent me help from His holy place. And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered ; now, I was always conqueror.'

Thursday, May 25, he writes, 'The moment I awaked, "Jesus, Master," was in my heart and in my mouth : and I found all my strength lay in keeping my eye fixed upon Him, and my soul waiting on Him continually. Being again at St. Paul's in the afternoon, I could taste the good word of God in the anthem, which began, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord : with my mouth will I ever be showing forth thy truth from one generation to another." Yet the enemy injected a fear, "If thou dost believe, why is there not a more sensible change?" I answered (yet not I), "That I know not. But this I know, I have now *peace with God* : and *I sin not to-day*, and Jesus my Master has forbidden me to take thought for the morrow."

The next day he says, 'My soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness, because of manifold temptations. I asked Mr. Töltschig, the Moravian, what to do. He said, "You must not fight with them, as you did before, but flee from them, the moment they appear, and take shelter in the wounds of Jesus." The same I learned also from the afternoon anthem, which was, "My soul truly waiteth still upon God : for from Him cometh my salvation ; He is my defence, so that I shall not greatly fall. O put your trust in Him always, ye people ; pour out your hearts before Him ; for God is our hope."

For some days he walked as a little child, with trembling, and with doubts and fears and subtle temptations assailing him ; nor was he free from

external opposition. He found a refuge in earnest prayer, in diligent reading of the Scriptures, and in active Christian work. During this time he narrowly watched the varying states of mind through which he was passing. He writes, May 27, 'Believing one reason of my want of joy was want of time for prayer, I resolved to do no business till I went to church in the morning, but to continue pouring out my heart before God. And this day my spirit was enlarged. So that, though I was now assaulted by many temptations, I was more than conqueror, gaining more power thereby to trust and to rejoice in God my Saviour. 28.—I waked in peace, but not in joy. In the same even, quiet state I was till the evening, when I was roughly attacked in a large company [at Mrs. Hutton's house] as an Enthusiast, a Seducer, and a Setter forth of new Doctrines. By the blessing of God I was not moved to anger, but after a calm and short reply went away ; though not with so tender a concern as was due to those who were seeking death in the error of their life.'

The critical writers on Wesley's life have almost wholly overlooked the significance of the event we have just reviewed ; but it did not escape the keen discernment of Lecky, who writes, 'It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the scene which took place at that humble meeting in Aldersgate Street forms an epoch in English history. The conviction which then flashed upon one of the most powerful and most active intellects in England is the true source of English Methodism.'¹

Charles Wesley, like his brother, had long been

¹ *England in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 558.

earnestly seeking 'redemption.' He was at this time seriously ill, and was lodging with a Mr. Bray, whom he describes as 'a poor ignorant mechanic, who knows nothing but Christ.' Bray was a happy believer, a Moravian, to whom Charles Wesley became closely attached. Of him he wrote, 'Mr. Bray is to supply Böhler's place. We prayed together for faith. I was quite overpowered, and melted into tears.'

It appears that a spirit of inquiry on the subject of religion was at this time extensively excited in London, partly by the recent preaching of Whitefield, partly by the private labours of Peter Böhler, who had lately left London, and partly by the preaching of John Wesley, who was admitted into several of the London pulpits, and was followed by immense crowds of people.¹

On May 17, Charles writes :

'To-day I first saw Luther on the Galatians. We began, and found him nobly full of faith. I marvelled that we were so soon and so entirely removed from him that called us into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel. Who would believe our church had been founded upon this important article of justification by faith alone? . . . I spent some hours this evening in private with Martin Luther, who was greatly blessed to me, especially his conclusion of the second chapter. I laboured, waited, and prayed to feel, "who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*." When nature, near exhausted, forced me to bed, I opened the book upon, "For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, because *a short work will the Lord make upon the earth*." After this comfortable assurance that He would come and not tarry, I slept in peace. . . . About midnight I was waked by a return of my pleurisy. I felt great pain, and straitness

¹ *Life of Charles Wesley*, i. 130.

at my heart; but found immediate relief by bleeding. I had some discourse with Mr. Bray: thought myself willing to die the next moment, if I might but believe this: but was sure I could not die, till I did believe. I earnestly desired it. . . . At five this morning the pain and difficulty in breathing returned. The surgeon was sent for; but I fell asleep before he could bleed me a second time. I received the Sacrament, but not Christ. Mrs. Turner came, and told me I should not rise from that bed till I believed. I believed her saying, and asked, "Has God then bestowed faith upon you?" "Yes, He has." "Why, have you peace with God?" "Yes, perfect peace." "And do you love Christ above all things?" "I do, above all things incomparably." "Then are you willing to die?" "I am, and would be glad to die this moment; for I know all my sins are blotted out; the handwriting that was against me is taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross. He has saved me by His death; He has washed me with His blood; He has hid me in His wounds. I have peace in him, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Her answers were so full to these and the most searching questions I could ask, that I had no doubt of her having received the atonement: and waited for it myself with a more assured hope. Feeling an anticipation of joy upon her account, and thanking Christ as I could, I looked for him all night, with prayers, and sighs, and unceasing desires.'

The frequent returns of his pleurisy, and his very enfeebled state, appear to have alarmed his friends, who began to be apprehensive that his end was near. His brother, therefore, and a few others, met together on Saturday evening, and spent the night in prayer. The next day was Whit Sunday. He says, 'I waked in hope and expectation of His coming. At nine my brother and some friends came, and sang a hymn to

the Holy Ghost. My comfort and hope were hereby increased. In about half an hour they went. I betook myself to prayer: the substance as follows: O Jesus, Thou hast said *I will come unto you*. Thou hast said, *I will send the Comforter unto you*. Thou hast said, *My Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you*. Thou art God, who canst not lie. I wholly rely upon Thy most true promise. Accomplish it in Thy time and manner.' Having said this, he was composing himself to sleep, in quietness and peace, when he heard one, who had come into the room, say, 'In the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thine infirmities.' The words struck him to the heart. He sighed, and said within himself, 'O that Christ would but thus speak to me!' Presently, sending to make inquiries who had spoken the words that had so affected him, he says, 'I felt in the mean time a strange palpitation of heart, and said, yet feared to say, "I believe! I believe!"'

Bray read to him the words, *Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile*. 'Still I felt,' he says, 'a violent opposition, and reluctance to believe; yet still the Spirit of God strove with my own, and the evil spirit, till by degrees he chased away the darkness of my unbelief. I found myself convinced, I know not how nor when; and immediately fell to intercession.' He afterwards adds, 'I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ. My temper, for the rest of the day, was mistrust of my own great, but before unknown,

weakness. I saw that by faith I stood; and the continual support of faith, which kept me from falling, though of myself I am ever sinking into sin. I went to bed, still sensible of my own weakness (I humbly hope to be more and more so), yet confident of Christ's protection.' This was Charles's 'Day of Pentecost.'

On the following Wednesday, confined to his room, he spent the day in a devout and pious manner. 'At eight o'clock,' says he, 'I prayed by myself for love, with some feeling, and assurance of feeling more. Towards ten my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, "I believe!" We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer. At midnight I gave myself up to Christ, assured I was safe, sleeping or waking!'

The hymn which they sang at this time was in all probability one which he had composed two days before, when he could first cry out, 'I believe! I believe!' It appears in the Methodist Hymn Book thus (in the original there were eight verses):—

Where shall my wondering soul begin?
How shall I all to heaven aspire?
A slave redeemed from death and sin,
A brand plucked from eternal fire,
How shall I equal triumphs raise,
Or sing my great Deliverer's praise?

O how shall I the goodness tell,
Father, which Thou to me hast showed?
That I, a child of wrath and hell,
I should be called a child of God,
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,
Blest with this antepast of heaven!

And shall I slight my Father's love?

Or basely fear His gifts to own?

Unmindful of His favours prove?

Shall I, the hallowed cross to shun,

Refuse His righteousness to impart,

By hiding it within my heart?

Outcasts of men, to you I call,

Harlots, and publicans, and thieves!

He spreads his arms to embrace you all;

Sinners alone His grace receives:

No need of Him the righteous have;

He came the lost to seek and save.

Come, O my guilty brethren, come,

Groaning beneath your load of sin!

His bleeding heart shall make you room,

His open side shall take you in;

He calls you now, invites you home:

Come, O my guilty brethren, come!

The following are taken from a number of verses evidently addressed to John, entitled:

CONGRATULATION TO A FRIEND UPON BELIEVING IN CHRIST.

Bless'd be the Name that sets thee free,

The Name that sure salvation brings!

The Sun of Righteousness on thee

Hath rose with healing in His wings.

Away let grief and sighing flee;

Jesus hath died for thee—for thee!

And will He now forsake His own,

Or lose the purchase of His blood?

No; for He looks with pity down,

He watches over thee for good:

Gracious He eyes thee from above,

And guards and feeds thee with His love.

Since thou wast precious in His sight,
How highly favour'd hast thou been !
Upborne by faith to glory's height,
The Saviour-God thine eyes have seen ;
Thy heart has felt its sins forgiven,
And tastes anticipated heaven.

Still may His love thy fortress be,
And make thee still His darling care,
Settle, confirm, and stablish thee,
On eagles' wings thy spirit bear ;
Fill thee with heaven, and ever shed
His choicest blessings on thy head.

Thus may He comfort thee below ;
Thus may He all His graces give :
Him but in part thou here canst know :
Yet here by faith submit to live ;
Help me to fight my passage through,
Nor seize thy heaven till I may too.

Or if the sovereign wise decree
First number thee among the blest,
(The only good I'd envy thee,)
Translating to an earlier rest,
Near, in thy latest hour may I
Instruct, and learn of thee, to die.¹

Now, these three men, John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield, are brought together on one plane of religious experience. They have each been subjected to a severe spiritual discipline. They have each, as has been shown, partaken of the blessedness of him that believeth ; they have attained to justification by faith, and have proved that they could be justified by no other means. They are one in the bonds of a close affection, bound together as

¹ See *Life of Charles Wesley*, i. 139.

brothers and fellow-labourers, and fellow-helpers in their great and, as they believe, God-appointed work. They have one gospel—the gospel—for poor, wretched, sinful men and women; in which gospel they have faith, that greatest faith which is based on their personal experience of its power. They are at one in the acknowledgment of human sin, and of human redemption by Christ Jesus; in the acknowledgment of the supreme work of the Holy Spirit, of the absolute authority of Holy Scripture, and of preaching as the divinely ordained instrument of human conversion. They are one in their submission to an over-mastering passion of love for the souls of men, and of readiness to spend and be spent for them. They stand together as the three great leaders in the glorious revival of spiritual religion which took place in the eighteenth century. A divergence did afterwards arise on the grave but subordinate questions of election and predestination. But it led to their adaptation to speak to two classes of people in a divided Protestant Church, so that it might be said, ‘He that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles.’ This Wesley soon discerned. He wrote to his friend :—

‘August 9, 1740.

‘I thank you for yours, May 24. The case is quite plain. There are bigots both for predestination and against it. God is sending a message to those on either side. But neither will receive it, unless from one of his own opinion. Therefore, for a time, you are suffered to be of one opinion, and I of another. But when His time is come, God will do what man cannot—namely, make us both of one mind.

Then persecution will flame out, and it will be seen whether we count our lives dear unto ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy.

‘I, am, my dearest brother, ever yours,
‘JOHN WESLEY.’

Wesley was still in a very unsettled state of mind, alternately exalted and depressed. His sensitiveness to every shifting wind of outward influence was almost a weakness. It is hardly to be wondered at, considering his bodily frailty, the result of his many austerities, and the severe and almost continuous mental strain which he had for some time endured.

June 4 he wrote, ‘was indeed a feast-day. For, from the time of my rising till past one in the afternoon, I was praying, reading the Scriptures, singing praise, or calling sinners to repentance. All these days I scarce remember to have opened the Testament, but upon some great and precious promise. And I saw more than ever that the Gospel is in truth but one great promise from the beginning of it to the end.’

On June 6 he says, ‘I had still more comfort and peace and joy: on which I fear I began to presume. For in the evening I received a letter from Oxford, which threw me into much perplexity. It was asserted therein, “That no doubting could consist with the least degree of true faith: that whoever at any time felt any doubt or fear was not *weak in faith*, but had *no faith* at all: and that none had any faith till the Spirit of life has made him *wholly* free from the law of sin and death.”

‘Begging of God to direct me, I opened my Testament on 1 Cor. iii. 1, etc., where St. Paul speaks of those whom he terms *babes in Christ*, who were not

able to bear strong meat—nay, in a sense, carnal ; to whom, nevertheless, he says, *Ye are God's building, ye are the temple of God.* Surely, then, these men had some degree of faith ; though it is plain their faith was but weak.

‘After some hours spent in the Scriptures and prayer, I was much comforted. Yet I felt a kind of soreness in my heart, so that I found my wound was not fully healed. O God, save Thou me, and all that are weak in the faith, from doubtful disputations.’

He now determined to fulfil a purpose he had cherished in Georgia, of retiring to Herrnhut for a while. The time seemed propitious—his ‘weak mind would not bear to be thus sawn in sunder.’ And he hoped the conversing with those who were the living witnesses of the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with the weak, would be a means, by the Divine blessing, of establishing him in faith and spiritual strength. Taking leave of his mother at Salisbury, he passed on to Oxford, where he preached a sermon on ‘Salvation by Faith,’ speaking with marked clearness and precision on the Faith through which we are saved, and on the Salvation which is through faith ; and taking occasion to answer objections to the doctrine, particularly that to preach Salvation or Justification by Faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. The sermon was soon afterwards printed, and passed into many editions. It stands, where such a sermon should, at the beginning of his own collection of his published works. It was the first publication issued by him after his ‘conversion.’

On June 13, in company with his friend Ingham,

he set out, remaining three months in Germany, and returning to England on the night of Saturday, September 16.

He made minute observations of the appearance of the country and of the habits and customs of the people, noting with carefulness the religious state of those with whom he conversed, which led him to record, 'And here I continually met with what I sought for, viz., living proofs of the power of faith. Persons saved from inward as well as outward sin, by the love of God shed abroad in their hearts; and from all doubts and fears, by the abiding witness of the Holy Ghost given unto them.'

He visited Count Zinzendorf at Marienborn, and conversed largely with him, and afterwards with the chief officers of the church at Herrnhut, which place he reached on August 1. He gives, at some length, the statements made by half a score officers and members of the church respecting their life's history; also an account of the organization of the Church, and of their religious services and practices, his aim evidently being to make himself thoroughly familiar with whatever distinguished a people to whom he felt himself so deeply indebted.

He was much impressed by what he saw, and declares he would gladly have spent his life at Herrnhut, had not his Master called him to labour in another part of His vineyard. He adds, 'I was exceedingly comforted and strengthened by the conversation of this lovely people; and returned to England more fully determined to spend my life in testifying the gospel of the grace of God.'¹

¹ Whitehead, ii. 84.

He also observes, 'They have a peculiar esteem for lots, and accordingly use them both in public and private, to decide points of importance, when the reasons brought on each side appear to be of equal weight. And they believe this to be then the only way of wholly setting aside their own will, of acquitting themselves of all blame, and clearly knowing what is the will of God.'¹

During Wesley's absence from England, his brother Charles was exceedingly useful, especially in leading individuals to the Saviour, in visiting prisoners and others, and in preaching.

To his brother Samuel, Wesley wrote, 'God has given me at length the desire of my heart. I am with a Church whose conversation is in heaven, in whom is the mind that was in Christ, and who so walk as He walked. As they have all one Lord and one faith, so they are all partakers of one Spirit, the spirit of meekness and love, which uniformly and continually animates all their conversation.' And writing to Charles on the same day (July 7), he says, 'The spirit of the brethren is above our highest expectation. Young and old, they breathe nothing but faith and love, at all times and in all places.' And he rejoices that he has seen with his own eyes more than a hundred witnesses of the everlasting truth—'every one that believeth hath peace with God, and is freed from sin, and is in Christ a new creature.'

Soon after his return from Germany, Wesley seems to have adopted a rule of conduct which he afterwards urged upon his preachers, in the *Twelve Rules of a Helper*: 'Tell every one what you think wrong in

¹ *Journal.*

him, lovingly and plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your own heart.' So had he previously written to William Law, May 14, 1738, and again May 30; to his brother Samuel, July 7, 1738; to the Moravians, at Marienborn and Herrnhut; and to Samuel again, October 30, 1738.

' To the Rev. William Law.

' May 14, 1738.

' REVEREND SIR,

' It is in obedience to what I think to be the call of God, that I, who have the sentence of death in my own soul, take upon me to write to you, of whom I have often desired to learn the first elements of the gospel of Christ.

' If you are born of God, you will approve of the design, though it may be but weakly executed. If not, I shall grieve for you, not for myself. For as I seek not the praise of men, so neither regard I the contempt either of you or of any other.

' For two years (more especially) I have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises; and all that heard have allowed, that the law is great, wonderful, and holy. But no sooner did they attempt to fulfil it, but they found that it is too high for man; and that by doing "the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

' To remedy this, I exhorted them, and stirred up myself, to pray earnestly for the grace of God, and to use all the other means of obtaining that grace, which the all-wise God hath appointed. But still, both they and I were more and more convinced, that this is a law by which a man cannot live; the law in our members continually warring against it, and bringing us into deeper captivity to the law of sin.

' Under this heavy yoke I might have groaned till death, had not a holy man, to whom God lately directed me, upon my complaining thereof, answered at once, "Believe, and

thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. This faith, indeed, as well as the salvation it brings, is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thy own works, and thy own righteousness, and fly to him. For whosoever cometh unto Him He will in no wise cast out."

'Now, sir, suffer me to ask, How will you answer it to our common Lord, that you never gave me this advice? Did you never read the Acts of the Apostles, or the answer of Paul to him who said, "What must I do to be saved?" Or are you wiser than he? Why did I scarce ever hear you name the name of Christ? never, so as to ground anything upon "faith in His blood?" Who is this who is laying another foundation? If you say you advised other things as preparatory to this; what is this, but laying a foundation below the foundation? Is not Christ then the first, as well as the last? If you say you advised them because you knew that I had faith already, verily you knew nothing of me; you discerned not my spirit at all. I know that I had not faith, unless the faith of a devil, the faith of Judas, that speculative, notional, airy shadow, which lives in the head, not in the heart. But what is this to the living, justifying faith in the blood of Jesus? the faith that cleanseth from all sin; that gives unto have free access to the Father; to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" to have "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" which dwelleth in us; and "the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God?"

'I beseech you, sir, by the mercies of God, to consider deeply and impartially, whether the true reason of your never pressing this upon me was not this—that you had it not yourself? whether that man of God was not in the right, who gave this account of a late interview he had with you?—"I began speaking to him of faith in Christ: he was silent. Then he began to speak of mystical matters. I spake to him of faith in Christ again: he was silent. Then he began to

“speak of mystical matters again. I saw his state at once.” And a very dangerous one, in his judgment, whom I know to have the Spirit of God.

‘Once more, sir, let me beg you to consider, whether your extreme roughness, and morose and sour behaviour, at least on many occasions, can possibly be the fruit of a living faith in Christ? If not, may the God of peace and love fill up what is yet wanting in you!’

It is impossible to approve of the terms of this letter to one from whom he had received great benefits; nor can a sufficient excuse be found in the fact that it was written a fortnight before he obtained the peace of the gospel, and when his spirit was in a very agitated state; nay, though, as he affirms, ‘then sin had dominion over me,’ notwithstanding he fought with it continually. He seems for the time to have forgotten what was due to a gentleman, a senior, and a benefactor. Was it called for by the authority with which Law spoke on these questions?

Law replied at some length, and with moderation, but not without a keen but kind severity. To this Wesley forwarded a reply on the following day, closing with these words: ‘But how are you chargeable with my not having had this faith? If you intimate, that you discerned my spirit, then you are chargeable thus: 1. You did not tell me plainly I had it not. 2. You never once advised me to seek or to pray for it. 3. Your advice to me was only proper for such as had faith already; advices which led me further from it, the closer I adhered to them. 4. You recommended books to me, which had no tendency to this faith, but a direct one to destroy good works.

‘However, “Let the fault be divided,” you say, “between me and Kempis.” No ; if I understood Kempis wrong, it was your part, who discerned my spirit, and saw my mistake, to have explained him, and to have set me right.

‘I ask pardon, sir, if I have said anything inconsistent with the obligations I owe you, and the respect I bear to your character.’

It is not needful to follow the correspondence further. Law ends it with the words: ‘If it was my business to put this question to you, and if you have a right to charge me with guilt for the neglect of it, may you not much more reasonably accuse them who have authoritatively charge over you? Did the Church in which you are educated put this question to you? Did the bishop who ordained you either deacon or priest do this for you? Did the bishop who sent you a missionary to Georgia require this of you? Pray, sir, be at peace with me.’

But, as Canon Overton very aptly remarks, ‘it is neither a pleasing nor a profitable task to descant upon the disputes between two good Christians. It is far pleasanter to record that Wesley’s after-conduct was thoroughly characteristic of the noble and generous nature of the man. Though the divergence between him and his late mentor increased rather than diminished with years, yet he constantly referred to Law in his sermons, and always in terms of the warmest admiration and respect.’¹

To his brother Samuel he wrote, from Marienborn, in one of the letters referred to:—

¹ *The Life and Opinions of William Law.* By Canon J. H. Overton, M.A.

‘I was much concerned when my brother Charles once incidentally mentioned a passage that occurred at Tiverton: “Upon my offering to read,” said he, “a chapter in the Serious Call, my sister said, ‘Who do you read that to? Not to these young ladies, I presume; and your brother and I do not want it.’” Yes, my sister, I must tell you, in the spirit of love, and before God, who searcheth the heart, you do want it; you want it exceedingly. I know no one soul that wants to read, and consider deeply, so much the chapter of Universal Love, and that of Intercession. The character of Susurru, there, is your own. I should be false to God and you, did I not tell you so. O may it be so no longer; but may you love your neighbour as yourself, both in word and tongue, and in deed and truth!’

And again, from London, October 30, 1738:

‘That you will always receive kindly what is so intended, I doubt not. Therefore I again recommend the character of Susurru both to you and my sister, as (whether real or feigned) striking at the root of a fault, of which both she and you were, I think, more guilty than any other two persons I have known in my life. O may God deliver both you and me from all bitterness and evil-speaking, as well as from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism! . . .

‘O brother, would to God you would leave disputing concerning the things which you know not (if indeed you know them not), and beg of God to fill up what is yet wanting in you! Why should not you also seek till you receive “that peace of God which passeth all understanding”? Who shall hinder you, notwithstanding the manifold temptations, from rejoicing “with joy unspeakable, by reason of glory”? Amen! Lord Jesus! May you, and all who are near of kin to you (if you have it not already), feel his love shed abroad in your heart, by His Spirit which dwelleth in you; and be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of your inheritance. I am

‘Yours and my sister’s most affectionate brother.’

These were severe words to apply to his elder brother, an honoured clergyman of the Church of England. That Wesley judged it to be his duty to write thus must be admitted ; and with him duty was absolute law. It does not appear that he wrote in mere censoriousness. He wrote in the delicate, sensitive fidelity of his spirit. He was disposed to write in the same strain to the Church at Herrnhut, as we learn from the following fragment of a letter that was not sent.

He says : ' It may be observed that I had before seen a few things in the Moravians which I could not approve of. In this journey I saw a few more, in the midst of many excellent things ; in consequence whereof, in September, 1738, soon after my return to England, I began the following letter to the Moravian Church. But being fearful of trusting my own judgment, I determined to wait yet a little longer, and so laid it by unfinished :

' MY DEAR BRETHREN,

' I cannot but rejoice in your steadfast faith, in your love to our blessed Redeemer, your deadness to the world, your meekness, temperance, chastity, and love of one another. I greatly approve of your Conferences and Bands, of your methods of instructing children ; and, in general, of your great care of the souls committed to your charge.

' But of some other things I stand in doubt, which I will mention in love and meekness. And I wish that, in order to remove those doubts, you would, on each of these heads, first, plainly answer whether the fact be as I suppose ; and if so, secondly, consider whether it be right.

' Is not the Count all in all among you ?

' Do you not magnify your own Church too much ?

' Do you not use guile and dissimulation in many cases

‘Are you not of a close, dark, reserved temper and behaviour?’

The severity of tone adopted in these letters arrests attention. Is it to be ascribed to the fervour of his zeal, carrying him beyond the bounds of prudence? Or did he so write in the hope he might thereby most effectually arouse attention to an unwelcome subject?

But he is more deeply perplexing in the matter of his personal religious experience. He had declared that he was not a Christian until the Aldersgate-street incident. His brother Samuel, writing to Mrs. Hutton, says, ‘What Jack means by his not being a Christian till last month, I understand not. Had he never been in covenant with God? Then, as Mr. Hutton observed, baptism was nothing. Had he totally apostatized from it? I dare say not: and yet he must either be unbaptized, or an apostate to make his words true. Perhaps it might come into his crown that he was in a state of mortal sin, unrepented of, and had long lived in such a course. This I do not believe; however, he must answer for himself. . . . Besides, a sinful course is not an abolition of the covenant; for that very reason, because it is a breach of it. If it *were* not, it would not be *broken*.’

But if Wesley is below his own ideal, he is far above his brother Samuel’s. The conception of a Christian such as he desires to be—such as he is—is far ahead of that which the latter described as ‘being in the covenant of baptism.’ Are not these brothers representatives of two widely diverse ideals of the Christian life? Do they not stand on different sides of a line, which to-day divides the Christian Church?

John replied to Samuel in the following terms :

‘With regard to my own character, and my doctrine likewise, I shall answer you very plainly. By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ, as that sin hath no more dominion over him : and, in this obvious sense of the word, I was not a Christian till May the 24th last past. For till then sin had the dominion over me, although I fought with it continually ; but surely then from that time to this it hath not ;—such is the free grace of God in Christ. What sins they were which till then reigned over me, and from which, by the grace of God, I am now free, I am ready to declare on the house-top, if it may be for the glory of God.

‘If you ask by what means I am made free (though not perfect, neither infallibly sure of my perseverance), I answer, By faith in Christ ; by such a sort or degree of faith as I had not till that day. My desire of this faith I knew long before, though not so clearly till Sunday, January the 8th last.

‘Some measure of this faith, which bringeth salvation, or victory over sin, and which implies peace, and trust in God through Christ, I now enjoy by his free mercy ; though in very deed it is in me but as a grain of mustard-seed : for the plerophory of faith—the seal of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in my heart, and producing joy in the Holy Ghost, “joy which no man taketh away, joy unspeakable and full of glory ;” this witness of the Spirit I have not, but I patiently wait for it. I know many who have already received it ; more than one or two in the very hour we were praying for it. And having seen and spoken with a cloud of witnesses abroad, as well as in my own country, I cannot doubt but that believers who wait and pray for it will find these scriptures fulfilled in themselves. My hope is, that they will be fulfilled in me : I build on Christ, the Rock of Ages ; on His sure mercies described in His word, and on His promises, all of which I know are yea, and amen. Those who have not yet received joy in the Holy Ghost, the love of God, and the plerophory of faith (any or all of

which I take to be the witness of the Spirit with our spirit, that we are the sons of God), I believe to be Christians in that imperfect sense wherein I may call myself such; and I exhort them to pray that God would give them also "to rejoice in hope of the glory of God," and to feel "His love shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them."

We see from this that he is himself persuaded that he is now a Christian in the sense that he has now such a faith in Christ as brings a salvation which implies peace and trust in God; a faith whereby he is freed from the dominion of sin. This he calls being a Christian in an 'imperfect sense,' and he longs for something higher, as any true Christian may.

On October 14, he, being still in some perplexity, very closely examines himself whether he is 'a new creature in Christ Jesus.' He lays down five tests. To these, with one exception, he can return a satisfactory answer. The exception is thus stated:— 'Thirdly.—His desires are new, and indeed the whole train of his passions and inclinations. They are no longer fixed on earthly things; they are now set on the things of heaven, His love, and joy, and hope, his sorrow and fear, have all respect to things above. They all point heavenward. *Where his treasure is, there is his heart also.*

'I dare not say I am a new creature in this respect. For other desires often arise in my heart, but they do not reign. I put them all under my feet through Christ which strengtheneth me. Therefore I believe He is creating me anew in this also, and that He has begun, though not finished His work.'

But to these five criteria he adds, 'St. Paul tells

us elsewhere that *the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance.* Now although, by the grace of God in Christ, I find a measure of some of these in myself, viz. of peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance : yet others I find not. I cannot find in myself the love of God, or of Christ. Hence my deadness and wanderings in public prayer. Hence it is that even in the Holy Communion, I have frequently no more than a cold attention.

‘Again, I have not that joy in the Holy Ghost ; no settled lasting joy. Nor have I such a peace as excludes the possibility either of fear or doubt. When holy men have told me I had no faith, I have often doubted whether I had or not ; and those doubts have made me very uneasy, till I was relieved by prayer and the Holy Scriptures.’

Wesley’s childlike simplicity seems here to lead him astray. Is he not wrong in permitting the word of even a holy man to persuade him he has no faith ? But he adds :

‘Yet upon the whole, though I have not yet that joy in the Holy Ghost, nor the full assurance of faith, nor the (proper) “witness of the Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God,” much less am I, in the full and proper sense of the words, “in Christ a new creature,” I nevertheless trust that I have a measure of faith, and am “accepted in the Beloved :” I trust “the handwriting that was against me is blotted out,” and that I am “reconciled to God” through His Son.’

He seems here to be judging himself by too severe a standard. Is he not denying himself to be a true Christian because he cannot prove himself to

be a perfect Christian? Surely a true Christian may say, 'Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect'?

But this is not the limit of the difficulty. On January 4 of the following year (1739) he wrote, obviously referring to himself, 'One who had had the form of godliness many years, wrote the following reflections:

'My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm, I am not a Christian now. Indeed, what I might have been I know not, had I been faithful to the grace then given, when, expecting nothing less, I received such a sense of the forgiveness of my sins as till then I never knew. But that I am not a Christian at this day, I as assuredly know, as that Jesus is the Christ.

'For a Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which (to mention no more) are love, peace, joy. But these I have not. I have not any love of God. I do not love either the Father or the Son. Do you ask, how do I know whether I love God, I answer by another question, "How do you know whether you love me?" Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold. You feel this moment that you do or do not love me. And I feel this moment I do not love God; which therefore I know, because I feel it. And I know it also by St. John's plain rule, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." For I love the world. I desire the things of the world, some or other of them; and have done all my life. I have always placed some part of my happiness in some or other of the things that are seen, particularly in meat and drink [!], and in the company of those I loved. For many years, I have been, yea, and still am, hankering after a happiness, in loving and being loved by one or another. And in these I have, from time to time, taken more pleasure than in God.

‘Again, joy in the Holy Ghost I have not. I have now and then some starts of joy in God ; but it is not that joy. For it is not abiding. Neither is it greater than I have had on some worldly occasions. So that I can in nowise be said to “rejoice evermore ;” much less to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

‘Yet again : I have not “the peace of God ;” that peace, peculiarly so called. The peace I have may be accounted for on natural principles. I have health, strength, friends, a competent fortune, and a composed, cheerful temper. Who would not have a sort of peace in such circumstances ? But I have none which can, with any propriety, be called “a peace which passeth all understanding.”

‘From hence I conclude, though I have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor, I am not a Christian. Though I have endured hardship, though I have in all things denied myself and taken up my cross, I am not a Christian. My works are nothing ; my sufferings are nothing ; I have not the fruits of the Spirit of Christ. Though I have constantly used all the means of grace for twenty years, I am not a Christian.’

Tyerman is content to say ‘this is extremely puzzling,’ and to leave his reader to ‘form his own opinion,’ as do Southey and the earlier biographers, unless they omit altogether any reference to the subject.

But all this must be read in the light of the letter just now quoted, addressed to his brother Samuel, in which he affirms that he was not a Christian until May 24, because sin had dominion over him ; but that by ‘such a sort or degree of faith’ as he had on that day, sin’s dominion was broken, and he then became a Christian—a Christian, it is true, in ‘an imperfect sense.’ But in this letter of January, 1739, he had in view another condition, the attainment of

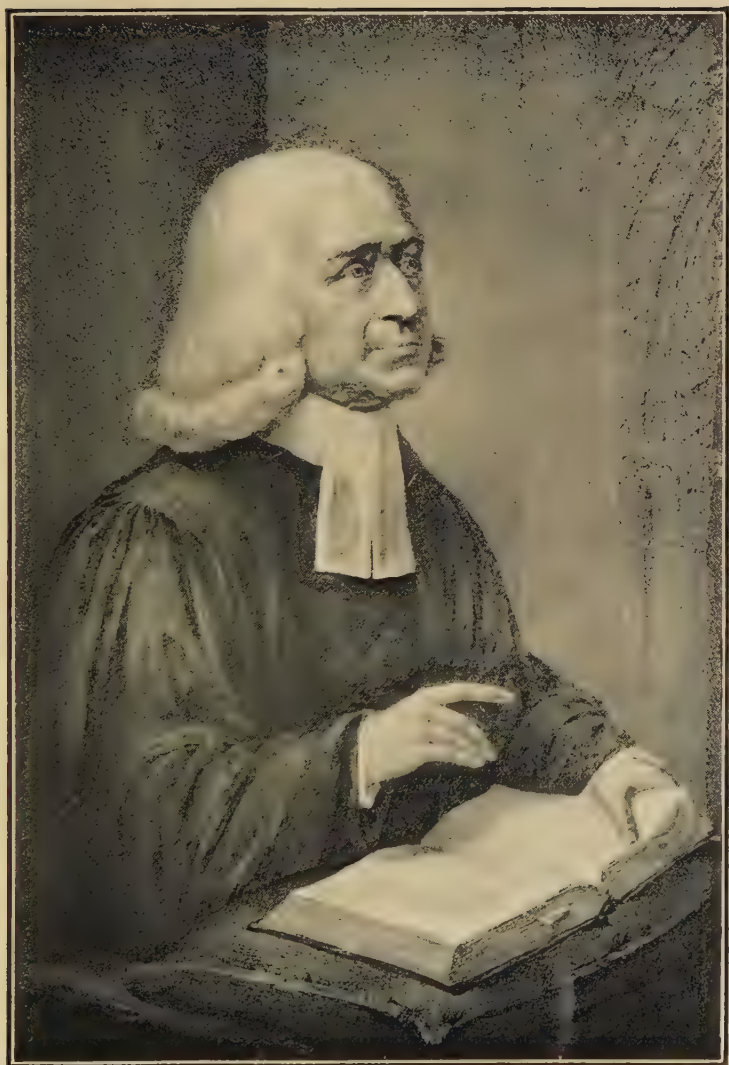
which he judges to be necessary in order to be a Christian. It is 'the plerophory of faith,' a condition which describes the utmost Christian maturity. This he had not attained. Yet he could not doubt that he had 'a measure of faith.' In saying that he has 'not any love of God,' is he not led astray by looking for strong emotional feelings, which are so variable under differing conditions? An authoritative voice declares that 'whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected.'

Wesley must not be blamed for subjecting himself to the severest test possible. But it would be a grievous error to teach that one is not a Christian until he is 'full grown.'

To another he writes : 'After a long sleep, there seems now to be a great awakening in this place also. The Spirit of the Lord hath already shaken the dry bones, and some of them stand up and live. But I am still dead and cold ; having peace indeed, but no love or joy in the Holy Ghost.'

To another : 'Verily the Spirit of the Lord hath lift up his standard against the iniquity which had overspread our land. O pray ye for us, that He would send more labourers into His harvest! And that He would enable us, whom He hath already sent, to approve ourselves faithful ministers of the New Covenant by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report. In particular, let all the brethren and sisters who are with you, pray that God would warm, with His love, the cold heart of, dear sir, your much obliged and very affectionate brother in Christ.'

Once more : 'Do not think, my dear brother,



JOHN WESLEY.

From a bust modelled from the life by Enoch Wood.

that I have forgotten you. I cannot forget you, because I love you: though I cannot love any one as yet, as I ought, because I cannot love our blessed Lord *as I ought*. My heart is cold and senseless. It is indeed a heart of stone. Pray for me, and let all your household pray for me, yea, and all the brethren also, that our God would give me a broken heart, a loving heart; a heart wherein His Spirit may delight to dwell. . . . Above all, I want you to pray a great deal for your poor, weak brother.'

Truly he walked in a vale of humility!

How much more guardedly, clearly, and justly Wesley afterwards wrote and spoke on these subjects his printed sermons abundantly show. Dr. Rigg, a careful student of Wesley and his work, says, 'The fluctuations in Wesley's own views and experience, during the early months after his conversion, show that his views respecting the nature of the Spirit's witness, and the character and extent of regeneration, were, as was to be expected, not fully defined or finally settled until some time after.' And he adds, 'By making the most of Wesley's antecedent preparation of heart, and by laying too much stress on those fluctuations of spirit and of view, and those self-depreciatory statements respecting his own experience soon after his conversion, the like of which are so commonly found in the experience of humble and conscientious young converts, who, as yet, are necessarily wanting in experience of spiritual difficulties, perplexities, and temptations, and whose natural but unwarranted expectations of settled joy and tranquillity have been painfully disappointed, it

is possible to diminish the proportions and to obscure the relations of the great cardinal change in Wesley's spiritual character.'¹

Wesley has been much assailed by his critics for his credulity in matters relating to witchcraft, apparitions, the action of good and evil spirits, and other related subjects. Isaac Taylor says, 'Wesley's most prominent infirmity was his wonder-loving credulity; from the beginning to the end of his course this weakness ruled him. Few were the instances in which he exercised a due discrimination in listening to tales involving what was miraculous, or out of the order of nature. It is, in fact, mortifying to contemplate an instance like this, of a powerful mind bending like a straw in the wind before every whiff of the supernatural.'² The accusation is not denied. Wesley himself is explicit on the subject. He wrote, 'With my latest breath will I bear my testimony against giving up to infidels one great proof of the invisible world; I mean, that of witchcraft and apparitions, confirmed by the testimony of ages.'³

But there is a bearing of this subject upon Wesley's mental characteristics that has escaped observation. Credulity and incredulity are streams that not unfrequently run side by side, a readiness to believe being often accompanied by a difficulty in believing. The man of feeble faith in things unseen—of which things alone faith takes cognizance—often clings to any outward or visible fact, to sustain him in his

¹ *The Living Wesley*.

² *Wesley and Methodism*, p. 70.

Works, xiv. 304. See also iii. 324, 404; iv. 76.

wavering. To how great an extent is this the case to-day, both within the Church and beyond its boundaries! How many persons cannot quietly rely upon the true foundations of faith! Thus far they are incredulous. They are not unwilling, but unable, to believe. They therefore desire confirmation from what is visible or tangible; hence springs credulity. Now, notwithstanding Wesley's strong faith, he was troubled not a little with the questionings of unbelief. These two apparently conflicting, if not contradictory states of mind in him are obvious. For, while we find him contending for belief in the unseen and spiritual, and habitually living under the influence of that belief himself; yet evidences are not wanting that he had great difficulty in maintaining it. In a somewhat remarkable sermon on *The Case of Reason considered*, while showing the inability of reason to produce faith, he says:—"Many years ago I found the truth of this by sad experience. After carefully heaping up the strongest arguments which I could find, either in ancient or modern authors, for the very being of a God, and (which is nearly connected with it) the existence of an invisible world, I have wandered up and down, musing with myself, "What if all these things which I see around me, this earth and heaven, this universal frame, has existed from eternity? What if 'the generation of men be exactly parallel with the generation of leaves'? if the earth drops its successive inhabitants, just as the tree drops its leaves? What if that saying of a great man be really true, 'Death is nothing, and nothing is after death'? How am I sure that this is not the case; that I have not followed cunningly devised fables?" And I have

pursued the thought, till there was no spirit in me, and I was ready to choose strangling rather than life.'¹

These words, while giving further insight into Wesley's mental habits, show also with what labour he strove to create, or to sustain, a living apprehension of things unseen. He was by nature a reasoner, and the faculty had been fostered by training. But he could not demonstrate the being of a God, or a spiritual world, or an immortality. Of things seen or demonstrable, faith is not the evidence. Therefore his readiness to look for such visible or tangible proofs as he judged were to be found in supernatural events. In the light of this confession, we are better able to understand the words in a remarkable letter of July 27, 1766, to his brother Charles, 'I have no direct evidence (I do not say, that I am a child of God, but) of anything invisible or eternal.'

It is observable that from this time (1738) all reference to his religious state disappears from his Journal. But Canon Overton is not quite accurate in saying that, 'henceforth during the whole of his long life hardly the shadow of a doubt crossed his path; clouds and darkness constantly swept over his outer life, but there was perpetual and unclouded sunshine within.'²

Wesley addressed the following interesting letter to the Moravian Church:

¹ *Works*, vi. 356.

² *John Wesley*. By J. H. Overton, M.A. London. Methuen & Co. 1891. It is a great pleasure to refer to this highly appreciative Life of Wesley.

' To the Church of God which is in Herrnhut, John Wesley, an unworthy Presbyterian of the Church of God in England, wisheth all grace and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

' October 14, 1738.

' Glory be to God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for His unspeakable gift ! for giving me to be an eye-witness of your faith, and love, and holy conversation in Christ Jesus ! I have borne testimony thereof with all plainness of speech, in many parts of Germany, and thanks have been given to God by many on your behalf.

' We are endeavouring here also, by the grace which is given us, to be followers of you, as ye are of Christ. Fourteen were added to us, since our return, so that we have now eight bands of men, consisting of fifty-six persons ; all of whom seek for salvation only in the blood of Christ. As yet we have only two small bands of women ; the one of three, the other of five persons. But here are many others who only wait till we have leisure to instruct them, how they may most effectually build up one another in the faith and love of Him who gave Himself for them.

Though my brother and I are not permitted to preach in most of the churches in London, yet (thanks be to God !) there are others left, wherein we have liberty to speak the truth as it is in Jesus. Likewise every evening, and on set evenings in the week at two several places, we publish the word of reconciliation, sometimes to twenty or thirty, sometimes to fifty or sixty, sometimes to three or four hundred persons met together to hear it. We begin and end all our meetings with singing and prayer ; and we know that our Lord heareth our prayer, having more than once or twice (and this was not done in a corner) received our petitions in that very hour.

' Nor hath He left Himself without other witnesses of His grace and truth. Ten ministers I know now in England, who lay the right foundation, " The blood of Christ cleanseth

us from all sin.”¹ Over and above whom I have found one Anabaptist, and one, if not two, of the teachers among the Presbyterians here, who, I hope, love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and teach the way of God in truth.

‘O cease not, ye that are highly favoured, to beseech our Lord that He would be with us even to the end; to remove that which is displeasing in His sight, to support that which is weak among us, to give us the whole mind that was in Him, and teach us to walk even as He walked! And may the very God of peace fill up what is wanting in your faith, and build you up more and more in all lowliness of mind, in all plainness of speech, in all zeal and watchfulness; that He may present you to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that ye may be holy and unblamable in the day of his appearing.’

He now wrote cheery words to various friends concerning the work that was being done, but depreciatory ones concerning himself. To Mr. Ingham at Herrnhut: ‘O my dear brother, God hath been wonderfully gracious to me ever since our return to England. There are many adversaries, but a great and effectual door is opened; and we continue through evil report and good report to preach the gospel of Christ to all people, and earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Indeed, He hath given unto us many of our fiercest opposers, who now receive with meekness the ingrafted word. . . . Mr. Stonehouse hath at length determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and to preach unto all, remission of sins through faith in His blood. Mr. Sparkes also is

¹ ‘He particularly refers to those he personally knew, who had been lately awakened out of sleep, and now saw the way of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.’—Whitehead.

a teacher of sound doctrine. Mr. Hutchins is strong in the faith and mightily convinces gainsayers, so that no man hitherto has been able to stand before him. Mr. Kinchin, Gambold, and Wells have not yet received comfort, but are patiently waiting for it. Mr. Robson, who is now a minister of Christ also, is full of faith and peace and love. So is Mr. Combes, a little child who was called to minister in holy things two or three weeks ago. Indeed, I trust the Lord will let us see, and that shortly, a multitude of priests that believe.'

To Count Zinzendorf he writes, 'The Word of the Lord again runs and is glorified; and His work goes on and prospers. Great multitudes are everywhere awakened, and cry out, "What must we do to be saved?" Many of them see that there is only one name under heaven whereby they can be saved; and more and more of those who seek it, find salvation in His name, and are of one heart and one soul.'

'Wesley's homeward voyage in 1738,' says one of the ablest of the critics of Wesley's life and work, 'marks the conclusion of his High Church period. He abated nothing of his attachment to the ordinances of the Church, either then or to the last days of his life, and he did not so soon reach that degree of independence of her hierarchy and some of her rules which marks his furthest point of divergence; but his Journals during this voyage chronicle for us that deep dissatisfaction which is felt whenever an earnest nature wakes up to the incompleteness of a traditional religion; and his after life, compared with his two years in Georgia, makes it evident that he passed into a new spiritual region. His [earlier]

Journals are marked by a depression which we never meet with again.'¹ 'In 1739 Whitefield, writing to the societies whom Woodward had anxiously vindicated from the charge of any tendency to separate from the Church, urged them neither to be confined by her Liturgy nor submissive to her rulers. This was not Wesley's language; it was language he would have condemned. But adherence to the Church was no longer the *first* condition of membership in any society with which he was in sympathy. The birthday of a Christian was already shifted from his baptism to his conversion, and in that change the partition line of two great systems is crossed.'² These last are weighty words, and show the clear discernment of the writer.

Wesley, as we have seen, returned to London from Germany in the evening of Saturday, September 16, and on the following day he says, 'I began to declare in my own country the glad tidings of salvation, preaching three times, and afterwards expounding the Holy Scripture to a large company in the Minories.' 'On Monday,' he says, 'I rejoiced to meet with our little society, which now consisted of thirty-two persons' (the society which was formed on May 1, and which met in Fetter Lane). 'The next day I went to the condemned felons in Newgate, and offered them free salvation. In the evening I went to a society in Bear Yard, and preached repentance and remission of sins. The next evening I spoke the truth in love at a society in Aldersgate Street. Some

¹ *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century*. By Julia Wedgwood, p. 140.

² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

contradicted at first ; but not long : so that nothing but love appeared at our parting. Thursday, 21, I went to a society in Gutter Lane ; but I could not declare the mighty works of God there, as I did afterwards at the Savoy in all simplicity. And the Word did not return empty. Finding abundance of people greatly exasperated by gross misrepresentations of the words I had spoken, I went to as many of them in private as my time would permit. God gave me much love towards them all. Some were convinced they were mistaken. And who knoweth but God will soon return to the rest, and leave a blessing behind him? On Saturday I was enabled to speak strong words both at Newgate and at Mr. E.'s society ; and the next day at St. Anne's, and twice at St. John's, Clerkenwell ; so that I fear they will bear me there no longer.' He had many similar experiences, as when on Sunday, October 8, he preached at the Savoy Chapel, on the parable, 'or history rather, of the pharisee and publican, I suppose for the last time.'

In this way he continued to labour, preaching 'the new way' with much fervour and frequency, in such of the churches as were open to him, in visiting, and in expounding in the various societies where he was welcomed. In November he paid a visit to Oxford, where he began more narrowly to inquire what is the doctrine of the Church of England concerning the much controverted point of Justification by Faith. The sum of what he found he published early in the following year, for the use of others.¹

¹ *The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith, and Good Works. Extracted from the Homilies of the Church of England.* London, 1739.

This he followed a little later by a second volume on the same subject.¹ He revived the reading of prayers at Bocardo—the chamber over the north gate, used as a prison; also in two of the city workhouses, where he preached twice in the week; and on both days at the Castle; and expounded at Mr. Fox's Society. Hearing that Mr. Whitefield had arrived from Georgia, he hastened to London to meet him, where 'God gave us once more to take sweet counsel together.' He preached at St. Antholin's, at Islington, and at St. Swithin's, 'for the last time.' On Sunday, November 5, he preached at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate; in the afternoon at Islington, and in the evening, he says, 'to such a congregation as I never saw before, at St. Clement's in the Strand. As this was the first time of my preaching here, I suppose it is to be the last.' Such crowds congregated wherever he preached that the ordinary attendants at the churches complained. This was one cause of the closing of the doors against him. Another lay in the strangeness of the message which he brought.

On December 24 he preached at Great St. Bartholomew's in the morning, and at Islington in the afternoon, where, he says, 'we had the blessed Sacrament every day this week, and were comforted on every side.' On the following Sunday, December 31, he preached to many thousands in St. George's, Spitalfields, and to a yet more crowded congregation at Whitechapel in the afternoon. Thus ended this eventful year.

¹ *Two Treatises. The first, on Justification by Faith only, according to the Eleventh Article of the Church of England. The second on the Sinfulness of Man's Natural Will.* From the works of Dr. Barnes. London, 1739.

CHAPTER VI
THE FOUNDATIONS OF
METHODISM

1739

THE new year was ushered in by a very extraordinary service held in the evening of New Year's Day, 1739. Messrs. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and the two brothers Wesley were present at a love-feast¹ at Fetter Lane, with about sixty others, the number of the Fetter Lane Society at that time. 'About three o'clock in the morning,' Wesley says, 'as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice, We praise Thee, O God ; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.' Whitefield, writing of this day, says that he received the Holy Sacrament, preached twice and expounded twice, and found this to be the happiest New Year's Day that he ever saw ; and afterwards adds that he spent the whole night in close prayer, psalms, and thanksgivings with the

¹ A simple service instituted by the Moravians in imitation of the Agapæ, or love-feasts, of the Early Church.

Fetter Lane Society. Nor was this the only all-night service they held, for on January 5, he writes again, 'Held a Conference at Islington concerning many things of importance, with seven ministers of Jesus Christ, despised Methodists, whom God in his providence brought together. We continued in fasting and prayer till three o'clock, and then parted with a full conviction that God was about to do great things among us ; and again, on Sunday 7, preached twice, expounded to three Societies, and afterwards spent the whole night in prayer and thanksgiving at Fetter Lane.'¹

Thus began a year of supreme importance in the history of the great spiritual revival in these islands, as the incidents to be recorded will show. Wesley continued the same round of earnest labour that he had pursued since his return to England. He visited Oxford, Dummer, and Reading ; and in London found full employment amongst the many societies, where he was continually urged to expound. From all the churches, however, he was excluded, except Basingshaw, Islington, St. Giles's, and St. Katherine's ; so that in the earlier part of the year, previous to his going to Bristol, he did not preach more than half a dozen sermons in the churches.

The character of Wesley's work at this time may be gathered from the following extract from a letter written by him to Whitefield :—

' February 26, 1739.

' MY DEAR BROTHER,

' Our Lord's hand is not shortened amongst us. Yesterday I preached at St. Katherine's, and at Islington,

¹ Whitefield's *Journals*.

where the church was almost as hot as some of the society rooms used to be. I think I never was so much strengthened before. The Fields, after service, were white with people praising God. About three hundred were present at Mr. S——'s; thence I went to Mr. Bray's, then to Fetter Lane, and at nine to Mr. B——'s; where also we only wanted room. To-day I expound in the Minories at four, at Mrs. W——'s at six, and to a large company of poor sinners in Gravel Lane (Bishopsgate) at eight. The society at Mr. Cronch's does not meet till eight, so that I expound before I go to him near St. James's Square; where one young woman has been lately filled with the Holy Ghost, and overflows with joy and love. On Wednesday at six, we have a noble company of women, not adorned with gold or costly apparel, but with a meek and quiet spirit, and good works. At the Savoy on Thursday evening we have usually two or three hundred, most of them, at least, thoroughly awakened. Mr. A——'s parlour is more than filled on Friday, as is Mr. P——'s room twice over; where, I think, I have commonly had more power given me than at any other place. A week or two ago, a note was given me there, as near as I can remember, in these words: "Your prayers are desired for a sick child that is lunatick, and sore vexed day and night, that our Lord would heal him, as He did those in the days of His flesh; and that he would give his parents faith and patience till his time is come."

' On Saturday se'n night a middle aged, well-dressed woman at Beech-Lane (where I expound usually to five or six hundred before I go to Mr. E——'s society) was seized, as it appeared to several about her, with little less than the agonies of death. Prayer was made for her, and after five days of diligent seeking she was filled with love and joy, which she openly declared at the next meeting; so that thanksgivings also were given to God by many on her account. It is to be observed, her friends have accounted her mad for these three years; and accordingly bled,

blistered her, and what not. Come and let us praise the Lord, and magnify His name together.' ¹

During the first few weeks of the year Whitefield had preached about thirty sermons in different churches in and around London. Early in February he went to Bath and Bristol ; but on his arrival found all the churches closed against him. In a few days, however, he was granted the use of St. Werburgh's and of St. Mary Redcliff. But the Chancellor of Bristol interfered, and threatened that if he continued to preach or expound in the diocese without licence he should first be suspended and then expelled. This was the turning-point. Whitefield was not so submissive to Church order as his companion Wesley, who in such circumstances might have hesitated to disobey so direct a prohibition. Wholly to suppress Whitefield by such measures was impossible ; and hence, being shut out of the Bristol churches, away he went and preached in the open-air to two hundred colliers in Kingswood. This was the boldest step yet taken by any of the Methodists ; and perhaps none but the impulsive, large-hearted Whitefield would have dreamed of so shocking a departure from Church rule and usage. The Rubicon was passed. A clergyman had dared to be so irregular as to preach in the fields, and God had sanctioned the irregularity by making it the occasion of much blessing. This is so interesting an incident, leading to so great consequences in the mission of the heroic little band of Christian evangelists, that the following minute accounts from Whitefield's *Journal* may not inappropriately be inserted. He says :

¹ See *Continuation of Whitefield's Journal*, pp. 42, 43, 2nd ed.

'Sunday, January 21.—Preached twice, with great freedom in my heart and clearness in my voice, to two thronged congregations, especially in the afternoon, when, as I was informed, near a thousand people stood out in the churchyard, and hundreds more returned home that could not come in. This put me first upon thinking of preaching without doors. I mentioned it to some friends, who looked upon it as a mad notion. However, we kneeled down and prayed that nothing may be done rashly.

'Friday, February 16.—Having long felt an earnest yearning toward the poor colliers, who were very numerous, and yet were as sheep having no shepherd, I went upon a mount and spake to as many as came to hear; upwards of two hundred. [Here he bursts into a holy jubilation], "*Blessed be God that the ice is now broke, and I have now taken the field. Some may censure me. But is there not a cause? Pulpits are denied, and the poor colliers are ready to perish for lack of knowledge.*"

'Wednesday, February 21.—[All the church doors being now shut against him, and if open not able to contain half that came to hear, at three in the afternoon, he went to Kingswood amongst the colliers. It was a fine day, and near two thousand people were assembled. He says], "I preached and enlarged on John iii. 3, for near an hour, and I hope to the comfort and edification of those that heard me." [He goes on to say]:

'Friday, February 23.—After dinner, I was taken very ill, so that I was obliged to lie upon the bed; but at three I went according to appointment, and preached to near four or five thousand people, from a mount in Kingswood, with great freedom. The sun shone very bright, and the people standing in such an awful manner round the mount, in the profoundest silence, filled me with an holy admiration.

'Sunday, February 25.—When I arose in the morning, I thought I should be able to do nothing; but the divine strength was greatly magnified in my weakness. About six

in the morning I prayed, sung with, and exhorted my morning visitors, as I did last Lord's day. At eight I read prayers and preached to a very thronged congregation at Newgate; from thence I rode to Bussleton [Brislington] a village about two miles from Bristol, where was such a numerous congregation, that, after I had read prayers in the church, I thought it best to go and preach in the churchyard. The people were exceedingly attentive, and afterwards, by the leave of the minister, who invited me thither, we had a Sacrament; and I hope it was a communion of saints indeed. At four I hasted to Kingswood. At a moderate computation, there were above ten thousand people. The trees and hedges were full; all was hushed when I began; the sun shone bright, and God enabled me to preach for an hour with great power, and so loud that all (I was told) could hear me. Blessed be God, Mr. B[rai]n spoke right. The fire is kindled in the country. May the gates of hell never be able to prevail against it !'

At a later date he calculated his congregation at not fewer than twenty thousand, and remarks, 'To behold such crowds stand about us in such awful silence, and to hear the echo of their singing, is very solemn and surprising. My discourse continued for near an hour and a half.'

In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for 1739, p. 162, it is stated, 'Mr. Whitefield has been wonderfully laborious and successful, especially among the poor prisoners at Newgate, Bristol, and among the rude colliers of Kingswood. On Saturday, the 18th instant, he preached at Hannam [Hanham] Mount to five or six thousand persons, and in the evening removed to the Common, about half a mile farther, where three mounts and the plains around were crowded with so great a multitude of coaches, foot and horsemen, that

they covered three acres, and were computed at 20,000 people.'

During the month of February, Wesley had three separate interviews with bishops of the Established Church. On the 6th, he went with Whitefield to the Bishop of Gloucester, to solicit a subscription for Georgia. On the 21st, he and his brother Charles waited on Potter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who showed them great affection; spoke mildly of Whitefield; cautioned them to give no more umbrage than necessary; to forbear exceptionable phrases; and to keep to the doctrines of the Church. They told him they expected persecution; but would abide by the Church till her articles and homilies were repealed. From Potter, they proceeded direct to Gibson, Bishop of London, who denied that he had condemned them, or even heard much about them. Whitefield's *Journal*, he said, was tainted with enthusiasm, though Whitefield himself was a pious, well-meaning youth. He warned them against Antinomianism, and dismissed them kindly.¹

About this time (March, 1739) a certain Captain Williams made an affidavit before the Mayor of Bristol, scandalously affecting the conduct of Wesley when in Georgia, especially in reference to his treatment of Mrs. Williamson (*née* Hopkey), and the circumstances connected with his leaving the colony. This was published, to the subsequent great detriment of the newly formed society.

This scurrilous pamphlet would not deserve notice were it not for the fact that it was the occasion of Wesley giving to the world one of the most interesting

¹ C. Wesley's *Journal*.

and instructive autobiographies ever published. In the preface to his *Journal* he says: 'I had no design or desire to trouble the world with any of my little affairs; as cannot but appear to every impartial mind, from my having been so long "as one that heareth not;" notwithstanding the loud and frequent calls I have had to answer for myself. Neither should I have done it now, had not Captain Williams's affidavit, *published as soon as he had left England*, laid an obligation upon me, to do what in me lies, in obedience to that command of God, "Let not the good which is in you be evil spoken of." With this view I do at length "give an answer to every man that asketh me a reason of the hope which is in me," that in all things "I have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." This first "extract" from his private *Journal* comprises the period from his embarking for Georgia to his return to London, and was published in 1739.

'The real character of the men who had begun this suit soon after appeared. Causton was prosecuted for an embezzlement of public money; and Williamson fled clandestinely from the colony, to avoid the consequences of more grave offences.'

Two years afterwards, to check the ill effects of the affidavit, Wesley reissued so much of his *Journal* as related to this affair. Happily Wesley was led to continue the publication of extracts from his *Journal* to the end of his life.¹

¹ In *The Weekly History*, of June 27, 1741, published by Whitefield, the following note appears: 'Whereas an affidavit made by a gentleman some time ago at Bristol, against the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, has been lately reprinted, with instructions at the bottom for people to apply to Mr. Whitefield for further information; this is to give notice,

As bearing upon the publication of this *Journal*, the following extract from a later part of it may appropriately find place here. It is dated December 3, 1738. The *Journal* was published either at the close of this, or (probably) at the early part of the following year. Wesley says, 'I received a letter, earnestly desiring me to publish my account of Georgia; and another as earnestly dissuading me from it, "because it would bring much trouble upon me." I consulted God in His Word, and received two answers; the first, Ezek. xxxiii. 2-6 [According to the duty of a watchman to do his duty in warning the people, the prophet is warned of his duty]. The other, "Thou therefore endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."'

Tyerman gives the following interesting letter from Wesley to his friend Whitefield; it is dated March 16, 1739, and affords an insight into Wesley's occupation at the time:

' March 16, 1739.

' MY DEAR BROTHER,

' On Thursday, the 8th instant, we breakfasted at Mr. Score's, Oxford, who is patiently waiting for the salvation of God. Thence we went to Mrs. Campton's, who has set her face as a flint. After we had spent some time in prayer, Mr. Washington came with Mr. Gibbs, and read that he knew nothing of the reprinting of that affidavit, but that he has made diligent inquiry into that affair when abroad, and has found that the Rev. Mr. Wesley has been much injured, both in respect to anything criminal in his character; and as to his going from his Bail, there being no Bail given. The whole prosecution I verily believe was groundless. Such as require further particulars, I refer them to Mr. Wesley's first *Journal*, page 46, which I believe to be a true account.

' GEORGE WHITEFIELD.'

The connection of the affidavit with the publication of the *Journal* is the justification of so long a treatment of it.

several passages out of Bishop Patrick's *Parable of the Pilgrim*, to prove that we were all under a delusion, and that we were to be justified by faith and works. Charles Metcalfe withstood him to the face. After they were gone, we again besought our Lord that He would maintain His own cause. Meanwhile, Mr. Washington and Mr. Watson were going about to all parts, and confirming the unfaithful ; and at seven, when I designed to expound at Mrs. Campton's, Mr. Washington was got there before me, and was beginning to read Bishop Bull against the witness of the Spirit. He told me he was authorized by the minister of the parish to do this. I advised all who valued their souls to depart ; and, perceiving it to be the less evil of the two, that they who remained might not be perverted, I entered directly into the controversy, touching both the cause and fruits of justification. . . .

'At my return to Mrs. Fox's, I found our dear brother Kinchin just come from Dummer. We rejoiced, and gave thanks, and prayed, and took sweet counsel together ; the result of which was, that instead of setting out for London, as I designed, on Friday morning, I set out for Dummer, there being no person to supply the church on Sunday. At Reading I found a young man, Cennick by name, strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus. He had begun a society there the week before ; but the minister of the parish had now well-nigh overturned it. Several of the members of it spent the evening with us, and it pleased God to strengthen and comfort them.

'On Saturday morning, our brother Cennick rode with me, whom I found willing to suffer, yea, to die for his Lord. We came to Dummer in the afternoon : Miss Molly was weak in body, but strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Surely her light ought not thus to be hid under a bushel. She has forgiveness, but not the witness of the Spirit ; perhaps because our dear brother Kinchin seems to think them inseparable.

'On Sunday morning we had a large and attentive

congregation. In the evening, the room at Basingstoke was full, and my mouth was opened. We expected much opposition, but had none at all.

‘On Monday, Mrs. Cleminger being in pain and fear, we prayed, and her Lord gave her peace. About noon we spent an hour or two in conference and prayer with Miss Molly; and then set out in a glorious storm; but I had a calm within. We had appointed the little society at Reading to meet us in the evening; but the enemy was too vigilant. Almost as soon as we were out of the town, the minister sent, or went, to each of the members, and began arguing and threatening, and utterly confounded them, so that they were all scattered abroad. Mr. Cennick’s own sister did not dare to see us, but was gone out on purpose to avoid it.

‘On Tuesday I came to Oxford again, and from Mrs. Fox’s went to Mrs. Campton’s. I found the minister of the parish had been there before me, to whom she had plainly declared that she had never had a true faith in Christ till a week ago. After some warm and sharp expressions, he told her he must repel her from the holy communion. Finding she was not convinced, even by that argument, he left her calmly rejoicing in God her Saviour.

‘At six in the evening we were at Mrs. Fox’s society; about seven at Mrs. Campton’s: the power of the Lord was present at both, and all our hearts were knit together in love.

‘The next day we had an opportunity to confirm most, if not all, the souls which had been shaken. In the afternoon I preached at the Castle. We afterwards joined together in prayer, having now Charles Graves added to us, who is rooted and grounded in the faith. We then went to Mr. Gibbs’s room, where were Mr. Washington and Mr. Watson. Here an hour was spent in conference and prayer, but without any disputing. At four in the morning I left Oxford. God hath indeed planted and watered: O may He give the increase.

‘I am, etc.,

‘JOHN WESLEY.’

On March 22, Whitefield wrote to Wesley entreating him in the most pressing manner to come to Bristol without delay. From this Wesley shrank, chiefly under the influence of the Scriptures,¹ which, according to his method of consulting them in emergencies, presented themselves to him. The journey was proposed to the Society at Fetter Lane. Charles opposed, till, appealing similarly to the Word, he received the message, 'as spoken to himself,' 'Son of man, behold, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes at a stroke; yet shalt thou not mourn or weep, neither shall thy tears run down.' The question was referred to the Society, but, they being unable to come to one mind, it was agreed to decide it by lot; by which it was determined he should go. Several afterwards desiring they might 'open the Bible' concerning the issue of this, they did so on the following passages, 'which,' says Wesley, 'I shall set down without any reflection upon them. 2 Sam. iii. 1: "Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker." 2 Sam. iv. 11.: "How much more when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? Shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?" 2 Chron. xxviii. 27: "And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem."' ²

It is not easy to see what instruction could be

¹ Deut. xxxii. 49; xxxiv. 8; Acts ix. 16; Acts viii. 2.

² *Journal*, March 28, 1739.

gained from this haphazard appeal to the Sacred Word; or what impression such passages as the above could make on the minds of the inquirers, other than a sad and gloomy one. Their relevance is not in any way indicated in the subsequent history.¹

Wesley left London on Thursday, March 29, expounded to a small company in the evening at Basingstoke, and reached Bristol on Saturday evening. Whitefield writes, 'Saturday, March 31.—I was much refreshed with the sight of my honoured friend, Mr. John Wesley, whom I had desired to come hither, and whom I had now the pleasure of introducing to my friends; he having never before been at Bristol.'² On Sunday Whitefield preached in the open air, and Wesley remarks, 'I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this *strange way* of preaching

¹ Casting lots after solemn prayer to God for guidance, in the extreme difficulties of life, is not without Scriptural precedent; but this custom, which Wesley borrowed from the Moravians, cannot be too strenuously condemned. The opening the Bible at random, and taking the first verse that strikes the eye as a sort of message specially given of God is an imitation of an ancient mode of divination, in which an oracular answer was sought in a doubtful juncture by opening Virgil's *Æneid* at random, and taking the first passage on which the eye chanced to rest as the desired response. It was introduced into the Christian Church in mediæval times, and was by no means an uncommon practice. It has more the character of a game of chance than of a reverent trembling at the Divine Word. It is right to say that Wesley afterwards abandoned it. Small cards, on one side of which a passage of Scripture was written or printed, and on the other side a verse of a hymn, were much used at one time amongst the Methodists and other religious bodies, as Playing or Conversational Cards. They came to be used by some persons in the way described above, which led to their emphatic denunciation.—See *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. i. pp. 15-25; iv. pp. 6-8, 40-43.

² Whitefield's *Journal*, March 31, 1739.

in the fields, having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.'

In the evening, however, he began to expound our Lord's Sermon on the Mount to a little society that met once or twice a week in Nicholas Street. He thought his subject was a 'pretty remarkable precedent of *field preaching*.' And on the following day, Monday, April 2, at four in the afternoon, he 'submitted to be *more vile*, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation to about three thousand people.'¹ His text on this most interesting occasion was, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*²

This must be regarded as the supremely momentous step in his evangelistic career, and in the progress of that spiritual revival which was destined to change the entire moral and religious aspect of these islands, to alter the condition of Church life, and to inaugurate an era of religious enthusiasm, of benevolence, and of Christian activity, which found its highest exemplifi-

¹ See two interesting papers, on the Brickfields, near St. Philip's Plain, where this memorable sermon was preached, by Rev. H. J. Foster, in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. ii. pp. 3-8; and, especially, iii. 25-41.

² During his missionary labours in Georgia in 1735, he had already held services and preached in the open air, but the circumstances were peculiar.—See *Works*, x. 447

cation in the reawakened vitality of the Churches of this land, in the establishment and spread of Churches in the newly rising transatlantic world, and in that outburst of zeal for foreign missions which distinguished the last century.

This opening of the new way was followed by an immediate and widespread activity in the preaching of the gospel, and by some very extraordinary phenomena in the conduct of many of those who heard.

In the evening after the open-air service just referred to, Wesley began expounding the Acts of the Apostles to a society meeting in Baldwin Street ; and the next day the Gospel of St. John in the chapel of Newgate, where he also read the morning service of the Church. The day following, at Baptist Mills, he 'offered the grace of God to about fifteen hundred persons.' In the evening of which day three women agreed to meet together to confess their faults one to another, and to pray for one another, that they might be healed ; and four young men also agreed to meet for the same purpose. These meetings were in imitation of the meetings of Peter Böhler's Fetter Lane Society. It is interesting to notice how closely this quite independent society was modelled on the Böhler rules, even to the beginning and meeting on a Wednesday. This was the beginning of an institution which was afterwards to become of so great value in the conservation and extension of the spiritual life amongst the Methodists. He inquires, 'How dare any man deny this to be, as to the substance of it, a means of grace, ordained by God ? Unless he will affirm with Luther in the fury of his solifidianism, that St. James's

Epistle is an epistle of straw?' In the next three days he began to expound the Scriptures in three other societies. On the following Sunday he preached at seven o'clock to about a thousand people at Bristol, afterwards to about fifteen hundred on the top of Hanham Mount in Kingswood, and to about five thousand more in the afternoon at Rose Green. Being desired on Tuesday to go to Bath, he preached there to about a thousand souls, and the next morning to twice the number; and to an equally large crowd at Baptist Mills in the afternoon. On the following Saturday, April 14, he preached at the poor-house, three or four hundred being within, and more than twice that number without. On Sunday morning at seven he proclaimed the truth to five or six thousand persons; afterwards to three thousand at Hanham Mount; to a crowded congregation at Newgate, after dinner; between five and six to about five thousand at Rose Green; and concluded the day with an address to one of the societies. On the following Tuesday, at a little society, the weight of the people caused the floor to give way; but soon all were quietly attending to the things that were spoken; later, he expounded at another society. It was now that the strange phenomena began to appear which for a time characterized the services. Wesley gives the following account: 'We then called upon God to confirm His word. Immediately one that stood by, to our no small surprise, cried out aloud with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death. But we continued in prayer, till a new song was put in her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God. Soon after, two other persons were seized with strong pain,

and constrained to roar for the disquietness of their heart. But it was not long before they likewise burst forth into praise to God their Saviour. Another called upon God as out of the belly of hell ; and in a short space he also was overwhelmed with joy and love, knowing that God had healed his backslidings. So many living witnesses hath God given, that His hand is *still* stretched out to heal, and that signs and wonders are even *now* wrought by His holy Child Jesus.'

Further instances occurred on the following days. In one case 'a young man was suddenly seized with a violent trembling all over, and in a few minutes, the sorrows of his heart being enlarged, sunk to the ground. But we ceased not calling upon God, until He raised him up full of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' On Easter Day, it being a thorough rain, he could only preach at Newgate at eight in the morning and two in the afternoon ; at a house near Hanham Mount at eleven, and in one near Rose Green at five ; concluding the day at a society in the evening, when 'many were cut to the heart, and many comforted.' On the next day he went, after repeated invitations, to Pensford, about five miles from Bristol, and asked of the minister leave to preach in the church ; but after waiting some time, and no reply being given, he preached 'in an open place' ; and in the afternoon, in a convenient place near Bristol, to above three thousand. Again on Tuesday at Bath to about one thousand ; at four in the afternoon to the poor colliers at Two Mile Hill in Kingswood ; and in the evening at Baldwin Street, when 'a young man, after a sharp, though short, agony, both of body and mind, found

his soul filled with peace, knowing in whom he had believed.' Later in the week, while preaching at Newgate, he 'was insensibly led,' he tells us, 'without any previous design, to declare strongly and explicitly that *God willeth all men to be thus saved*; and to pray that, if this were not the truth of God, He would not suffer the blind to go out of the way; but, if it were, He would bear witness to His word. Immediately one, and another, and another, sunk to the earth: they dropped on every side as thunderstruck. One of them cried aloud. We besought God in her behalf, and He turned her heaviness into joy. A second being in the same agony, we called upon God for her also; and He spoke peace unto her soul.' 'In the evening,' he says, 'I was again pressed in the spirit to declare, that Christ gave himself a ransom for all. And almost before we called upon Him, to set to His seal, He answered. One was so wounded by the sword of the Spirit, that you would have imagined she could not live a moment. But immediately His abundant kindness was showed, and she loudly sang of His righteousness. On Saturday all Newgate rang with the cries of those whom the Word of God cut to the heart, two of whom were in a moment filled with joy.' On the following Sunday he first declared the *free* grace of God to about four thousand people in Bristol; then at Clifton, at the desire of the minister (Rev. John Hodges) who was ill; thence he returned to a little plain near Hanham Mount, where about three thousand were present. At Clifton, in the afternoon, the church was quite full at prayers and sermon; and the churchyard at a burial which followed. At Rose Green, afterwards, it was computed

near seven thousand were gathered ; thence he repaired to the Gloucester Lane Society, and afterwards to the first love-feast in Baldwin Street. He might well exclaim, 'O how has God renewed my strength ! who used ten years ago to be so faint and weary with preaching twice in one day.'

It would not have excited surprise if these extraordinarily zealous labours had speedily abated ; but, although the number of services actually conducted by him may not have been generally quite so numerous (for he often attended the ordinary Church Service morning and evening, wherever he might be, preaching in the open air and to the societies out of Church hours), yet, in other respects, these are but samples of his efforts continued with unwearied devotion to the extremest limit of his physical strength, even to the end of his days.

It is not to be wondered at that many persons were offended at the strange physical phenomena which they witnessed. Amongst them was a physician, who was much afraid there might be fraud or imposture in the case. 'To-day,' Wesley says, 'one whom he [the physician] had known many years was the first while I was preaching in Newgate who broke out into strong cries and tears. He could hardly believe his own eyes and ears. He went and stood close to her, and observed every symptom, until great drops of sweat ran down her face, and all her bones shook. He then knew not what to think, being clearly convinced it was not fraud, nor yet any natural disorder. But when both her soul and body were healed in a moment, he acknowledged the finger of God.' This was probably Dr. Middleton,

a very early friend of the Wesleys in Bristol, whose death Charles Wesley mourned in an elegy of twenty-one verses, the reading of which moved the loving soul of Fletcher to tears.¹ It was probably for him that 'The Physician's Hymn' was written.²

On Tuesday, May 1, he writes, 'Many were offended again, and, indeed, much more than before. For at Baldwin Street my voice could scarce be heard, amidst the groanings of some, and the cries of others, calling aloud to Him that is mighty to save. I desired all that were sincere of heart to beseech with me the Prince exalted for us, that He would proclaim deliverance to the captives. And He soon showed that He heard our voice. Many of those who had been long in darkness saw the dawn of a great light, and ten persons, I afterwards found, then began to say in faith, "My Lord and my God." A Quaker, who stood by, was not a little displeased "at the dissimulation of those creatures," and was biting his lips and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunderstruck. The agony he was in was even terrible to behold. We besought God not to lay folly to his charge. And he soon lifted up his head, and cried aloud, "Now I know thou art a prophet of the Lord."'

At Newgate, while they were at prayer, another mourner was comforted; and another also, who had been thrown into perplexity by an opposer. As they rose from giving thanks for this one, another 'reeled four or five steps, and then dropped down.' They prayed with her and left her 'strongly convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for deliverance.' One, who was

¹ See *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, vi. 300.

² See *Life of Charles Wesley*, i. 233.

zealous for the Church and opposed to all Dissent, being informed that people 'fell into strange fits at the societies,' came to see for himself, and laboured to convince his acquaintance 'it was a delusion of the devil.' But while reading the sermon on 'Salvation by Faith,' 'he changed colour, fell off his chair, and began screaming terribly, and beating himself against the ground,' his breast heaving, at the same time, as in the pangs of death, and great drops of sweat trickling down his face. Wesley says, 'We all betook ourselves to prayer. His pangs ceased, and both his body and soul were set at liberty.'

Let Wesley give his own view of these singular occurrences. He writes :¹

'During this whole time I was almost continually asked, *How can these things be?* To one who had many times wrote to me on this head the sum of my answer was as follows : The question between us turns on matter of fact. You deny that God does now work these effects ; at least that He works them in *this* manner. I affirm both, because I have heard these things with my own ears, and seen them with my eyes. I have seen, as far as a thing of this kind can be seen, very many persons changed in a moment, from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and peace ; and from sinful desire, till then reigning over them, to a pure desire of doing the will of God. These are matters of fact whereof I have been, and almost daily am, an eye or ear witness. What I have to say touching visions or dreams is this : I know several persons in whom this great change was wrought in a dream, or during a strong representation to the eye of their mind, of Christ either on the cross or in glory. This is the fact ; let any judge of it as they please. And that such a change was then wrought

¹ *Journal*, May 20, 1739.

appears, not from their shedding tears only, or falling into fits, or crying out : these are not the fruits, as you seem to suppose, whereby I judge ; but from the whole tenor of their life, till then many ways wicked, from that time holy, just, and good. I will show you him that was a lion till then, and is now a lamb ; him that was a drunkard, and is now exemplarily sober ; the whoremonger that was, who now abhors the very garment spotted by the flesh. These are my living arguments for what I assert, viz. that God does now, as aforetime, give remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, even to us and to our children : yea, and that always suddenly, as far as I have known, and often in dreams or in the visions of God. If it be not so, I am found a false witness before God. For these things I do, and by His grace will, testify.'

Of these strange physical conditions he says :—

'Perhaps it might be because of the hardness of our heart, unready to receive anything unless we see it with our eyes and hear it with our ears, that God, in tender condescension to our weakness, suffered so many outward signs, at the very time when He wrought this inward change, to be continually seen and heard among us. But, although they saw signs and wonders (for so I must term them), yet many would not believe. They could not indeed *deny* the facts, but they could *explain* them away. Some said, "These were purely *natural* effects ; the people fainted away, only because of the heat and closeness of the rooms." And others were sure "it was all a cheat ; they might help it if they would. Else why were these things only in their private societies ? Why were they not done in the face of the sun ?" To-day (Monday, May 21, 1739) our Lord answered for Himself ; for while I was enforcing these words, *Be still and know that I am God*, He began to make bare His arm, not in a close room, neither in private, but in the open air, and before more than two thousand witnesses. One and another

and another was struck to the earth ; exceedingly trembling at the presence of His power. Others cried with a loud and bitter cry, "What must we do to be saved?" And in less than an hour seven persons, wholly unknown to me till that time, were rejoicing and singing, and with all their might giving thanks to the God of their salvation.'

In the evening he was interrupted at Nicholas Street, almost as soon as he had begun to speak, by the cries of one who was pricked at the heart, and strongly groaned for pardon and peace. He went on to declare what God had already done, in proof of that important truth, that He is 'not willing any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' Another person dropped down close to one who was a strongasserter of the contrary doctrine. While he stood astonished at the sight, a little boy near him was seized in the same manner. A young man who stood behind fixed his eyes on him, and sunk down himself as one dead ; but soon began to roar out and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him. This was Thomas Maxfield, of whom we shall hear more anon. Wesley adds, 'I never saw but one so torn of the evil one. Meanwhile many others began to cry out to the Saviour of all that He would come and help them, insomuch that all the house, and indeed all the street, for some space was in an uproar. But we continued in prayer ; and before ten the greater part found rest to their souls.' He was called from supper to one 'in a violent agony,' and about twelve o'clock to another. 'I think,' he adds, 'twenty-nine in all had their heaviness turned into joy this day.'

That the people were convicted of sin by the

Divine Spirit, through the medium of the Word preached, need not be doubted. But whatever explanations are given of these strange physical phenomena, they cannot be considered as in any way affecting the piety of those who were the subjects of them ; nor, in Wesley's view, was there in them any evidence of a changed character, though the character might be changed during their continuance. Perhaps his own words, written at a later period, will be thought to present as satisfactory an explanation as any that can be given. He says :

‘ I grant that extraordinary circumstances have attended this conviction in some instances. A particular account of these I have frequently given. While the Word of God was preached, some persons have dropped down as dead ; some have been, as it were, in strong convulsions ; some roared aloud, though not with articulate voice ; and others spoke the anguish of their souls. This is easily accounted for either on principles of reason or Scripture. First, on principles of reason. For how easy is it to suppose that a strong, lively, and sudden apprehension of the heinousness of sin, the wrath of God, and the bitter pains of eternal death, should affect the body as well as the soul, during the present laws of vital union ;—should interrupt or disturb the ordinary circulations, and put nature out of its course ! Yea, we may question whether, while this union subsists, it be possible for the mind to be affected, in so violent a degree, without some or other of those bodily symptoms following. It is likewise easy to account for these things on principles of Scripture. For when we take a view of them in this light, we are to add to the consideration of natural causes, the agency of those spirits who still excel in strength, and, as far as they have leave from God, will not fail to torment whom they cannot destroy ; to *tear* those that *are coming* to Christ. It is also remarkable that there is plain Scripture precedent

of every symptom which has lately appeared, so that we cannot allow the conviction attended with these to be madness, without giving up both reason and Scripture.' ¹

He further grants that 'touches of extravagance, bordering on madness,' may sometimes attend severe conviction, and that this may be easily accounted for by the present laws of our physical frame. Therefore, he concludes, 'it is not strange that some, while under strong impressions of grief or fear, from a sense of the wrath of God, should for a season forget almost all things else, and scarce be able to answer a common question; that some should imagine they see strange sights, or that others should be thrown into great fears. But all these effects vanish away in a moment, whenever the person convinced tastes of the pardoning love of God.' ²

Various opinions were then, and have ever since been entertained, not as to Wesley's *bona fides* in his accounts of these singular phenomena—this has never been questioned—nor as to the reality of their occurrence, nor as to the changes wrought in the character and lives of many of the victims of these strange experiences. But opinions have differed as to their exact nature and chief cause. Southey assails them with severity. He is answered by Watson, and by the editor of one edition of his own work. Charles Wesley was annoyed by them, though they occurred sometimes under his own preaching; and he even strove to prevent them, giving instructions at one service that if any were so affected they were to be carried out of the

¹ *Works*, viii. 130.

² *Ibid.*

building, and he reports that on that occasion the bearers were not troubled !

It is not altogether surprising that these effects followed, even if we put aside any reference to superhuman agency. As was shown above, Wesley himself gave full recognition to the working of the ordinary laws of human nature, physical and mental. It may be reasonably asked whether there were not sufficient natural causes to account for them to a very large extent. Let it be remembered that there had been a general religious apathy, and even a deep and abounding sinfulness in almost all parts of the land, and that Wesley's preaching was of a peculiarly effective character. If he lacked Whitefield's dramatic picturesqueness, his style was singularly clear, vivid, and incisive. None could misunderstand him. He denounced sin in terms entirely free from equivocation. He appealed with penetrating closeness to the consciences of his hearers, in a large proportion of whom there was the inevitable response of self-condemnation, so that, under his preaching, men and women were deeply convinced of personal sinfulness. Nor did he hide the terrible consequences of wrong-doing, which to him were a dreadful certainty. If he did not pourtray a hell of torments, he proclaimed one. There was no hiding of this awful subject in a maze of indefinite language, but an unhesitating affirmation of it in calm, clear, measured, scriptural terms. For the self-convicted ones there was no hope of exemption. The punishments of sin stood out before them clearly revealed. They could look for nothing but judgment, and a fiery indignation which should devour the

adversaries. In a guilty, self-condemning conscience, the fear of an inevitable retribution could but produce overwhelming dread and terror.

But another class of emotions was called into play. With equal clearness, with equally assured confidence, and with an appealing tenderness, he preached to the terror-stricken the Divine love for mankind, and the sufficiency of a Divinely provided atonement for all. Men could not hear Wesley preach, and yet doubt whether God loved them and desired their salvation ; or whether He had opened a way to Himself for all. In pitying tones he cried :

‘ Come all the world, come sinner thou,
All things in Christ are ready now.’

By the vilest and worst, who were in the throes of the keenest anguish, the same message was heard. Amid such revulsions of feeling even a strong self-control could hardly preserve a mental equilibrium. Joyous hope succeeding to overwhelming fear ; the first throbbings of a faith that looked out with any degree of assurance to the possibility of a certain salvation — all this was sufficient to disturb the balance of otherwise calm and self-controlled people. It cannot be questioned that some instances of these phenomena partook of the nature of hysteria, or hypochondriasis, conditions of physical prostration and mental exaltation, with lack of both mental and physical control, produced by severe and often prolonged nervous tension, or by strong emotional excitement. To this cause may be attributed the uncontrollable laughter, which Wesley afterwards records, and of which both himself and his brother

Charles, on one earlier occasion at least, had become unwilling victims. These conditions are of a most contagious character; the very act of one person being a suggestion to another. That they were produced directly by supernatural agency is not quite so clear. Wesley thought that they might arise either from Divine or from diabolical causes; as signs from the one source, or as hindrances, designed to throw discredit upon the whole work, from the other. His brother Samuel ascribed them wholly to the devil. But it may certainly be said that if such mental and physical disturbances are not sufficient wholly to account for these phenomena, they certainly afford suitable conditions for their occurrence.

With a view to the accommodation of the societies in Bristol, it was decided to build a room large enough for their use, and for those who might be disposed to attend with them when the Scriptures were expounded. The first stone of the building was laid on Saturday, May 12, 1739, 'with the voice of praise and thanksgiving.'

The Room—the New Room, as Wesley called it to the end of his days—was somewhat hastily run up, and perhaps too cheaply, with the result that by 1748 it had become so unsafe as to necessitate almost an entire rebuilding. Opportunity was taken greatly to enlarge it, and to secure the present well-known entrance from the Broadmead. The original Horse-fair end, with the 'court' and one of the 'alleys' subsequently mentioned, still remains very little, if at all, changed, though in a sadly dilapidated condition. As will be seen, the money arrangements for meeting

the cost of the rebuilding had most fruitful issues in the system of Methodist Church finance. This was the first instance of the erection of any building for the use of Methodist Societies; and, as was to be expected, it called forth various comments amongst Wesley's friends.

Wesley had not at first any expectation or design of being personally engaged either in the expense or in the direction of this work, having appointed eleven feoffees on whom he supposed these burdens would fall. But he quickly discovered his mistake. He found he was obliged to take upon himself the payment of the workmen, so that before he was well aware of it he had contracted a debt of £150. Whitefield and others of his friends in London declined to render any aid whatever, unless the feoffees were discharged, for, according to the existing Deed, they would have all power of control in the use of the building, and could even deny its use to Wesley himself. With their consent, therefore, the Deed was cancelled, and Wesley took the whole burden of the affair upon his own shoulders.

Wesley continued to preach in and around Bristol to attentive or excited crowds. At Bath—'in a meadow on the side of a hill close to the town,' shown in contemporary maps as 'Barton Fields,' which are now covered with the buildings of Gay Street and the Circus—he preached to about a thousand, 'several fine gay things among them;' at Rose Green—Whitefield's 'first field pulpit,' where refuse-heaps from the coal-pits gave him elevation—to the largest congregation he had had there, upwards of ten thousand souls; at King's-Weston-Hill, four

or five miles from the Bristol of those days, where two gentlemen in sport sent up many persons from the neighbouring villages, Wesley proclaimed the great truth of Ascension Day. On the following Sunday morning he preached to six thousand persons; then at Hanham, and again in the afternoon at Rose Green to eight or nine thousand; and in the evening they met in the shell of the new Society room. The following day he was earnestly advised not to preach abroad in the afternoon, as there was a combination of several persons who threatened terrible things. The report, however, only brought many of 'the better sort of people (so called),' and added more than a thousand to the ordinary congregation; 'but none scoffed, or interrupted, or opened his mouth.' A similar report gained him a much larger audience at Bath,¹ 'among whom were many of the rich and great.' He says, 'I told them plainly, the Scripture had concluded them all under sin, high and low, rich and poor, one with another. Many of them seemed to be not a little surprised, and were sinking apace into seriousness, when their champion appeared—the famous Beau Nash, the leader and arbiter of Bath life and fashion—and coming close to me asked, "By what authority I did these things?" I replied, "By the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid his hands upon me, and said, 'Take thou authority to preach the

¹ A letter in the Archives at Fetter Lane makes it quite clear that this meeting with Nash took place at an open-air preaching in [Richard Marchant's?] field.—*Proceedings of Wesley Historical Society*, vol. v. p. 9.

Gospel.'” He said, “This is contrary to Act of Parliament. This is a Conventicle.” I answered, “Sir, the Conventicles mentioned in that Act (as the preamble shows) are seditious meetings. But this is not such. Here is no shadow of sedition. Therefore it is not contrary to that Act.” He replied, “I say it is. And beside, your preaching frightens people out of their wits.” “Sir, did you ever hear me preach?” “No.” “How, then, can you judge of what you never heard?” “Sir, by common report.” “Common report is not enough. Give me leave, sir, to ask, is not your name Nash?” “My name is Nash.” “Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report. I think it is not enough to judge by.” Here he paused a while, and having recovered himself, asked, “I desire to know what this people comes here for?” On which one replied, “Sir, leave him to me. Let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body. We take care of our souls, and for the food of our souls we come here.” He replied not a word, but walked away.’

At this time Wesley was led to think much upon the unusual character of his ministry, and to consider the objections that were urged against it. After much prayer he determined to adhere to the following principles: As to the past, he declares that he acted from a desire to be a Christian (for he did not allow himself to have been one in the fullest sense), and a conviction that whatever he judged to be conducive thereto he was bound to do, and wherever he judged he could best answer this end, thither it was his duty to go. ‘On this principle,’ he says, ‘I set out for America; on this I visited the Moravian

Church, and on the same am I ready now (God being my helper) to go to Abyssinia, or China, or whithersoever it shall please God by this conviction to call me.' As to settling in college, he objects that he had no business there, having now no office and no pupils; and as to accepting of a cure of souls, it would be time enough to consider it when such was offered to him. But if it be asked how on Catholic principles he could justify the assembling of Christians, who were not of his charge, to sing psalms, and pray, and hear the Scriptures expounded, he replies:—

'If by "Catholic principles" you mean any other than Scriptural, they weigh nothing with me. I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures. But on scriptural principles I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in Scripture commands me, according to my power to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect, to do it at all, seeing I now have no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom, then, shall I hear? God or man? If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge you. A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, and woe is me if I preach not the gospel. But where shall I preach it on the principles you mention? Why not in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America: not in any of the Christian parts of the habitable earth? For all these are, after a sort, divided into parishes. If it be said, "Go back, then, to the heathen from whence you came." Nay, but neither could I now on these principles preach to them. For all the heathen in Georgia belong to the parish either of Savannah or Frederica.'

In writing to his brother Charles on the subject, in the June of this year, he says:

‘Man commands me not to do this in another’s parish; that is, in effect, not to do it at all. If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge ye.

“‘But” (say they) “it is just that you submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.” True; to every ordinance of man which is not contrary to the command of God. But if any man (Bishop or other) ordain that I shall not do what God commands me to do, to submit to that ordinance would be to obey man rather than God.

‘And to do this I have both an ordinary call and an extraordinary. My ordinary call is my ordination by the Bishop: “Take thou authority to preach the Word of God.” My extraordinary call is witnessed by the works God doeth by my ministry; which prove that He is with me of a truth in this exercise of my office. Perhaps this might be better expressed in another way: God bears witness in an *extraordinary manner*, that my *thus exercising my ordinary call* is well-pleasing in His sight.’ And he closes with the resolute words, ‘God being my helper, I will obey Him still, and if I suffer for it, His will be done.’

‘Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far, I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to do. And sure I am that his blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I therefore to be faithful, in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am, and as such am employed according to the plain direction of His Word, as I have opportunity of doing good unto all men. And His providence clearly concurs with His word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, and go about doing good.’¹

¹ *Works*, xii. 104.

Wesley's own words are the best exposition of the remarkable phrase which he here explains, which embraces his commission to preach the gospel, and to preach it to all, and that in any part of the world wherever he might happen to be. He usurped no man's prerogative by this. He always acknowledged the claims of the parish clergy, and wherever he went he would rather preach in the church than anywhere else. Preach he must ; he felt he was called of God to do that ; and he felt that his call was to meet a necessity which was not met by the parochial clergy or the parochial system. The adopted saying was soon to find its echo in another significant utterance, which expresses a conviction that seems to be already rising within him, that the purpose for which the Methodists were raised up, of whom he was the representative, was 'to reform the nation, particularly the Church ; to spread scriptural holiness over the land.'

On the occasion of unveiling the memorial in Westminster Abbey, the late Dean Stanley drew attention to the sculpture which shows Wesley preaching in Epworth churchyard, and he said, 'He took his stand upon his father's tomb—on the venerable and ancestral traditions of the country and the Church. That was the stand from which he addressed the world.' The chosen phrase is sculptured beneath the scene.

Receiving a pressing letter to haste to London, as the brethren in Fetter Lane were in great confusion for want of his presence and advice, he commended his Bristol flock to the grace of God, in whom they had believed, making the hopeful reflection, 'Surely

God hath yet a work to do in this place. I have not found such love, no not in England ; nor so child-like, artless, teachable a temper as He hath given to this people.'

Arriving in London on Wednesday, June 13, he received the Communion at Islington in the afternoon, visited his mother, and at six warned the women at Fetter Lane, knowing how they had been lately shaken, not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they were of God. At eight he met the brethren, when many misunderstandings and offences, that had crept in among them, were removed, and fellowship was again in a good measure renewed.

On the following day he went with his friend Whitefield to Blackheath, where 12,000 or 14,000 people were gathered. Whitefield surprised him by asking him to preach, which he did, 'though nature recoiled,' on his favourite subject, 'Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.' On another occasion he preached at 7 a.m. in Upper Moorfields to 6000 or 7000 people, and at five in the evening to about 15,000.

A week was spent in adjusting the affairs of the societies up and down London. This gave him trouble and great sorrow. In the evening (June 15) he went to a society at Wapping, 'weary in body and faint in spirit.' The Society at Fetter Lane afterwards met to humble themselves before God. 'In that hour,' he says, 'we found God with us, as at the first. Some fell prostrate on the ground. Others burst out, as with one consent, into loud praise and

thanksgiving. And many openly testified, there had been no such day as this, since January the first preceding.' On the following day he preached at seven in Moorfields, to 6000 or 7000 people, and at five on Kennington Common to about 15,000, besides attending public services and meetings of the Society.

Scenes similar to those witnessed in Bristol were repeated in London. Wesley says, 'While I was earnestly inviting all sinners *to enter into the holiest by the new and living way*, many of those that heard began to call upon God with strong cries and tears. Some sunk down, and there remained no strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion, in every part of their bodies, and so violently that often four or five persons could not hold one of them. I have seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits; but none of them were like these, in many respects. I immediately prayed that God would not suffer those that were weak to be offended. But one woman was offended greatly; being sure "they might help it if they would, no one should persuade her to the contrary," and was got three or four yards, when she also dropped down, in as violent an agony as the rest.' Twenty-six of those who had been thus affected (most of whom during the prayers that were made for them were in a moment filled with peace and joy) promised to call on him the next day. But only eighteen came; by talking closely with whom he found reason to believe, that some of them had gone down to their houses justified. The rest seemed to be patiently waiting for it.

On Monday, June 18, he left London early, and

preached in Bristol the next evening to a numerous congregation. Howel Harris¹ called upon him afterwards, and told him he had been much dissuaded from either hearing or seeing him, by many who said all manner of evil of him; but added, 'as soon as I heard you preach, I quickly found what spirit you were of. And before you had done, I was so overpowered with joy and love, that I had much ado to walk home.'

He found that in the brief eight days of his absence disputes had crept into the little society. The next day he therefore showed them what manner of people they were, preaching twice from, 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat.' And he was able to report, 'when we met in the evening, instead of reviving the dispute, we all betook ourselves to prayer. Our Lord was with us. Our divisions were healed. Misunderstandings vanished away, and all our hearts were sweetly drawn together, and united as at the first.' Calling upon one who did run well till he was hindered by some of those so-called French prophets,² he

¹ An exceedingly useful religious reformer in Wales. He entered St. Mary's Hall, Oxford, but the irregularities and wickedness of the place drove him away at the end of his first term. Endowed with remarkable gifts, he devoted his life to the spiritual elevation of his fellow-countrymen, in whose service his sufferings were very great, and his success extraordinary. He represented a band of earnest Welsh Methodists of a Calvinistic type, from whose labours sprang the widespread Calvinistic Methodist Church.

² Fanatical French Protestants who had found an asylum in this and other Protestant countries, and 'who carried with them the disease both of mind and body which their long sufferings had produced. For about half a century they had acted as frantic and knavish a part for the disgrace of a good cause as the enemies of that cause could have desired.'—See Southey's *Life of Wesley*. Bohn's Lib. Ed., pp. 165-170.

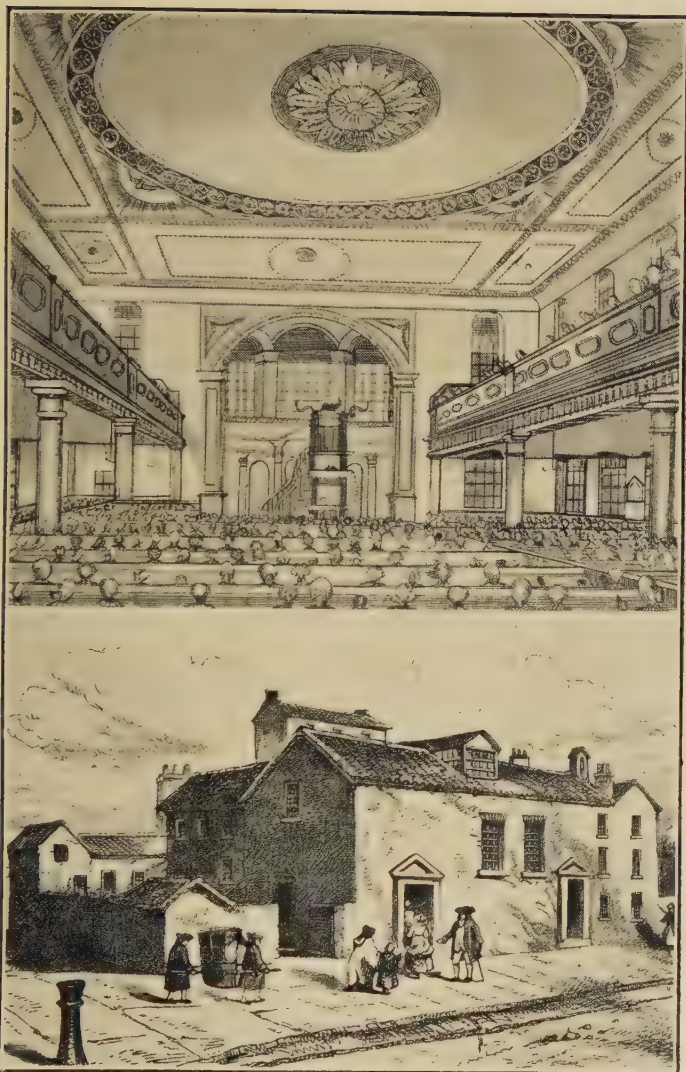
passed on to the society at Weavers' Hall,¹ where he exhorted all that followed after holiness to avoid as fire those who did not speak according to the law and the testimony. Preaching at Fishponds² in the afternoon of the same day, he had no life or spirit in him, and was much in doubt whether God would not lay him aside and send others to do this work. Coming back to the society in the city in this spirit, he began in much weakness to explain, 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God.' He told them they were not to judge of the spirit whereby any one spoke by either appearances or by common report, or by their own inward feelings ; nor by dreams, visions, or revelations, supposed to be made to their souls, any more than by their tears, or any involuntary effects wrought upon their bodies, warning them that these were of a doubtful disputable nature ; they might be from God, and they might not ; and were therefore not simply to be relied upon, or simply condemned, but to be brought to the only certain test, the law and the testimony.

While he was speaking, one dropped down as dead, and presently a second, and a third ; and in half an hour five others, most of whom were in violent agonies. After prayer some, and later on the others, were comforted, and rejoiced, praising God.

On the following Sunday, as he was riding to Rose Green, his horse suddenly pitched upon his

¹ The ancient Hall of the Weavers' Company ; swept away with other remains of the past when Victoria Street, Bristol, was laid out.

² A well-known suburb of Bristol, an old seat of Quaker life and worship. Anthony Purver resided there. (*Journal*, June 22, 1739.)



WESLEY PREACHING THE FIRST SERMON IN CITY ROAD CHAPEL,
NOVEMBER 1, 1778.

THE FOUNDERY, MOORFIELDS, LONDON.

head and rolled over, but the rider received no other apparent hurt than a little bruise on one side, and preached without pain to six or seven thousand persons.

Again he preached, during a violent storm of rain, under a little sycamore tree, near the 'house' whose foundation-stone had been laid by Whitefield for a school at Kingswood. The tree long survived, to become a 'historic' feature of the school-yard. A storm of wind destroyed it in 1842. He now usually preached once a fortnight at Conham, a village on the south side of Kingswood; on Sunday morning near Hanham Mount; once a fortnight at the school-house, in the middle of Kingswood; on Sunday evenings at Rose Green; and once a fortnight near the Fishponds, on the north side of the wood. With such devotion did he care for the poor colliers in this benighted neighbourhood.

It was his custom to give a particular account from time to time of the circumstances attending his work to such as he believed to be interested in it. One of his correspondents was the Rev. Ralph Erskine,¹ from whose reply the following is extracted: 'I desire to bless my Lord for the good and great news your letter bears, about the Lord's turning many souls "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," and that such a "great and effectual door is opened" amongst you as the "many adversaries" cannot shut. As to the outward

¹ The brothers Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, devoted ministers of the Established Church of Scotland, like Wesley and Whitefield were field-preachers and spiritual reformers. They were identified with the memorable 'Marrow Controversy,' and the founding of the 'Associate Presbytery.' Whitefield probably imbibed his earliest Calvinistic views from their writings.

manner you speak of, wherein most of them were affected who were cut to the heart by the sword of the Spirit, no wonder that this was at first surprising to you. Some instances you give seem to be exemplified in Scripture incidents. What influence sudden and sharp awakenings may have upon the body, I pretend not to explain. But I make no question Satan, so far as he gets power, may exert himself on such occasions, partly to hinder the good work in the persons who are thus touched with the sharp arrows of conviction, and partly to disparage the work of God, as if it tended to lead people to distraction.'

Continuing his work in Bristol, he was joined by Whitefield, and together they visited Baptist Mills, Thornbury, and Gloucester, where Wesley preached one morning to about five thousand, and in the evening to two or three thousand, who stayed through continued and violent rain. Conversing on the outward signs which so often accompanied the inward work of God, he found his friend's objections were chiefly grounded on misrepresentations. But Whitefield was soon able to judge for himself, for the following day he had no sooner begun in the application of his sermon to invite all sinners to believe in Christ, than four persons sank down close to him, one of them lying without sense or motion, a second trembling exceedingly, a third having strong convulsions over his whole body, and a fourth, equally convulsed, calling upon God with strong cries and tears.

On Sunday, July 22, while Wesley was preaching to a large crowd, the press-gang came and seized on

one of the hearers, whereupon Wesley inquires, 'Ye learned in the law, what becomes of Magna Charta, and of English liberty and property? Are not these mere sounds, while, on any pretence, there is such a thing as a press-gang suffered in the land?'

It was now agreed 'that all the members of our society should obey the Church to which we belong, by observing *all Fridays* in the year, as days of fasting or abstinence.' They also agreed that as many as could should then meet to spend an hour in prayer together. A report gained circulation that Wesley was a Papist, if not a Jesuit, which led him to insert in his printed *Journal* a letter written by him some time before to a priest, in which he had given briefly some of his judgments respecting Romanism.

After the ten weeks spent in Bristol and the neighbourhood, he returned to London at about eight o'clock on Sunday morning, and heard a sermon in the afternoon, which suggested to him his subject when he preached in the evening to eight or ten thousand people at Kennington.

The following day he had an interesting conversation with his mother, which he thus relates: 'I talked largely with my mother, who told me, that till a short time since she had scarce heard such a thing mentioned as the having forgiveness of sins, or God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; much less did she imagine this was the common privilege of all true believers. "Therefore," said she, "I never durst ask for it myself. But two or three weeks ago, while my son Hall¹ was pronouncing those words, in delivering

¹ Rev. Westley Hall married Martha, sister of Wesley. He was a weak man, by turns pious and profligate, a sad specimen of humanity.

the cup to me, 'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee,' the words struck through my heart, and I knew God for Christ's sake had forgiven me all my sins." She said that her father, Dr. Annesley, had declared a little before his death that for more than forty years he had no darkness, no fear, no doubt at all of his being accepted in the Beloved ; but that she had not once heard him preach explicitly upon it ; and so she supposed he looked upon it as the privilege of only a few, and not as promised to all the people of God.'

On each of four or five successive Sundays his congregation at Moorfields, in the earlier part of the day, amounted to upwards of ten thousand persons, and at Kennington Common in the afternoon to twice that number. At one, at least, of these larger gatherings his mother was present. But these great services did not comprise the whole of a Sabbath day's work ; for, in addition to the early (five o'clock) preaching, there were meetings in the evening. As, for instance, on one Sunday, after the great service at Kennington, he went to a society at Lambeth, where, the house being filled, the rest of the company stood in the garden. From this he went to the Fetter Lane Society, where he exhorted them to love one another—the want of that grace being a general complaint. After earnest prayer together, 'the flame kindled again as at first, and their hearts were knit together.' Here he strove to keep the members 'close to the

He is described by Dr. Clarke as 'a curate in the Church of England, who became a Moravian, a Quietist, a Deist (if not an Atheist), and a polygamist, which last he defended in his teaching and illustrated in his practice.—*Memoirs of the Wesley Family*, ii. 339. By Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.A.S. London, Tegg.

Church, and to all the ordinances of God, and to aim only at living a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.'

Being asked about this time by a serious clergyman in what points the Methodists differed from the Church of England, he answered, 'To the best of my knowledge in none: the doctrines we preach are the fundamental doctrines of the Church, clearly laid down in her Prayers, Articles, and Homilies.' But he pointed out in what respects they differed from 'that part of the clergy who dissent from the Church, though they own it not.'

As he was returning one day from preaching at Plaistow, a person galloping swiftly rode full against him, and overthrew both man and horse, but happily without hurt to either: one of the many instances he had to record of his remarkable preservation in circumstances of great danger. The following day, after dining with one of the brethren who had just been married, he went, as usual, to the society at St. James's, 'weary and weak in body; but,' he says 'God strengthened me for His own work; as He did at six at Mr. B[owers]'s; and at eight in Winchester-yard;—Southwark—part of the old palace of the Bishops of Winchester—'where it was believed were present eleven or twelve hundred persons: to whom I declared, if they had nothing to pay, God would frankly forgive them all.'

While he was preaching at Deptford, in a hall which held by computation two thousand persons, the press within and without being very great, at the beginning of his sermon, the beam supporting the floor of the hall broke; the floor at once sinking,

there followed much noise and confusion among the people. But two or three days before a man had filled the vault with hogsheads of tobacco, so that the floor, after sinking a foot or two, rested on them, and the service went on without further interruption.

He remained in London a month, strengthening the converts, and preaching as usual to larger and smaller companies ; the latter in houses, or rooms, occupied by the several religious societies with which he held fellowship.

Taking a little tour, he came, early in October, to Oxford, where he found a 'shattered condition of things.' The poor prisoners, both in the Castle and in the City prison, had none who cared for their souls to instruct, comfort, and encourage them ; none were left to visit the workhouses ; the little school, where twenty poor children had been taught for many years, was about to be broken up, there being none to support or attend it ; and the little company of believers, who once comforted and strengthened one another, were scattered abroad. These he rallied, and left them 'not without hope,' after a few of them had met 'to intreat God for the remnant that was left.'

Coming to Burford, he preached, it was judged, to twelve or fifteen hundred people, and finding that many approved of what they heard, he explained in an hour or two, and the next morning, the holiness of a Christian and the way to its attainment. Reaching Gloucester, he preached on Saturday evening to about a thousand persons ; on Sunday morning to two or three thousand ; about eleven at Runwick, seven miles from Gloucester, in the church, which

was much crowded, though upwards of a thousand remained in the churchyard. In the afternoon he preached to a still larger crowd ; and between five and six in the evening, on a little green near Stanley, he called on all who were present (about three thousand) to accept of Christ, as their only wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, being strengthened to speak as he had never done before, and continued 'speaking near two hours, the darkness of the night and a little lightning not lessening the numbers, but increasing the seriousness of the hearers.' This long day was ended by his expounding part of the Sermon on the Mount to a small serious company at Ebly. On the following day he reached Minchin-Hampton Common, nine or ten miles from Gloucester, where it was computed there were five or six thousand persons to hear him. He would gladly have stayed longer with 'this loving people,' but, being straitened for time, he hastened away after the sermon to Bristol, where his brother had been earnestly and successfully labouring for several weeks. At once he plunged into public and private ministrations, which filled a crowded week.

In response to a pressing invitation, he took a short journey into Wales, preaching near Chepstow to three or four hundred, and at Abergavenny to about a thousand, who stood patiently in the sharp frost, after sunset, while he described 'the plain old religion of the Church of England, which is now everywhere spoken against under the new name of Methodism.' The next day, in a yet sharper frost, five or six hundred people stayed while he explained the nature of the religion which is by faith. Passing

on to Usk he preached to a small company of poor people at noon ; in the afternoon, at Pontypool, he stood in the street, and cried aloud to about five or six hundred attentive listeners to believe in the Lord Jesus ; and in the evening, as he showed His willingness to save all that come unto God by him, many were melted to tears.

At Cardiff he made use of the Shire Hall, the minister not being willing he should preach in the church on a week-day. His hearers at Newport he characterized as 'the most insensible, ill-behaved people' he had seen in Wales. One elderly man cursed and swore almost incessantly during great part of the sermon, and at the close of it took up a great stone, which he many times attempted to throw, but could not. At four o'clock the same day, preaching again in the Shire Hall of Cardiff, where many of the gentry were gathered, he had great freedom of speech ; and at six, when 'almost the whole town,' it was said, were present, his heart was so enlarged that he knew not how to give over, but continued for three hours !

Returning to Bristol, he thus recorded his impressions of South Wales and its people : 'I have seen no part of England so pleasant for sixty or seventy miles together, as those parts of Wales I have been in. And most of the inhabitants are earnestly desirous of being instructed in the Gospel, and as utterly ignorant of it as any Creek or Cherokee Indian. I do not mean they are ignorant of the Name of Christ. Many of them can say both the Lord's Prayer and the Belief. Nay, and some all the Catechism ; but take them out of the road of

what they have learned by rote, and they know no more (nine in ten of those with whom I conversed) either of Gospel salvation, or of that faith whereby alone we can be saved, than Chicali or Tomo Chachi. Now what spirit is he of us who had rather these poor creatures should perish for lack of knowledge, than that they should be saved, even by the exhortations of Howel Harris or an itinerant preacher?'

In riding to Bradford (Wilts) he read over Mr. Law's book on the New Birth, and summed up his judgment upon it in the well-known words: 'Philosophical, speculative, precarious; Behmenish, void, and vain!'

After he had preached at Baptist Mills, in Bristol, a poor woman said to him, 'I does hope as my husband won't hinder me any more. For I minded he did shiver every bone of him, and the tears ran down his cheeks like rain.'

Several cases of the strange physical and mental phenomena already referred to were now brought under his notice. His remedy in every case was prayer, which sometimes was continued for many hours together.

Preaching one Sunday afternoon at Bradford, he held his congregation of more than ten thousand earnestly attentive to his word, though it rained violently. Returning in the evening from a service like this to Kingswood, he was soon occupied with several cases of penitential distress, which engaged him until one o'clock in the morning!

About this time he received a letter from the Rev. Josiah Tucker, a Bristol clergyman, who, also as Dean Tucker of Gloucester, was for many years a

busy and prominent man in the political and literary circles of the West. Tucker had recently written some criticisms on his work and Whitefield's in one of the elder Raikes's *Gloucester Journal*, in an essay, one of a series called *Country Common Sense*. The writer says :—

‘As I wrote the *Rules and Considerations* with an eye to Mr. Whitefield, yourself and your opposers, from a sincere desire to do some service to Christianity, according to the imperfect notions I had at that time of the real merits of the cause ; I at the same time resolved to take any opportunity that should offer for my *better* information.

‘On this principle it was that I made one of your audience, October 23, at Bradford [Wilts]. And because I thought I could form the best judgment of you and your doctrine from your sermon, I resolved to hear that first ; which was the reason that though, by accident, I was at the same house, and walked two miles with you, to the place you preached at, I spoke little or nothing to you. I must confess, sir, that the discourse you made that day, wherein you pressed your hearers, in the closest manner, and with the authority of a true minister of the Gospel, not to stop at *faith only*, but to add to it *all virtues*, and to show forth their *faith* by every kind of good works, convinced me of the great wrong done you by a public report, common in people's mouths, that you preach *faith* without works. For that is the only ground of *prejudice* any true Christian can have ; and is the sense in which your adversaries would take your words, when they censure them. For that we are justified by *faith only* is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of his apostles, and the doctrine of the Church of England. I am ashamed that, after having lived twenty-nine years since my baptism into this faith, I should speak of it in the lame, unfaithful, I may say false manner I have done in the paper above mentioned. What mere *darkness* is man when truth hideth her face from him.

‘Your adversaries and you mean quite another thing by faith. They mean, a bare believing, that Jesus is the Christ. You mean, a living, growing, purifying principle, which is the root of both inward and outward holiness; both of purity and good works; without which no man can have faith, or at least no other than a dead faith.

‘This, sir, you explained in your sermon at Bradford, Sunday, October 28, to near ten thousand people, who all stood to hear you with awful silence and great attention. I have since reflected how much good the clergy might do, if instead of shunning they would come to hear and converse with you; and, in their churches and parishes, would farther inforce those Catholic doctrines which you preach; and which I am glad to see have such a surprising good effect on great numbers of souls. I think, indeed, too many clergymen are culpable, in that they do not inform themselves better of Mr. Whitefield, yourself, and your doctrine from your own mouths; I am persuaded, if they did this with a Christian spirit, the differences between you would soon be at an end.’

Tucker was the first antagonist to whom Wesley wrote any reply—entering unwillingly upon ‘an untried path with fear and trembling, fear not of my adversary, but of myself.’ This first defensive piece was entitled, *The Principles of a Methodist*. He subsequently bore testimony to his first opponent, as ‘a calm and dispassionate controversialist,’ and as writing ‘like a gentleman.’ How often had he occasion afterwards to defend himself and his work!

Wesley had now to pass through new and painful experiences, and his wounding was to be in the house of his friends. We have already seen that disturbing influences were at work in the Fetter Lane Society which, since Böhler’s departure from England, was

mainly in the care of the Wesleys when they could be in town. Wesley returned from Bristol to London on Saturday, November 2, of this year. The first person whom he met was Mrs. Ewster, whom he had left 'strong in the faith and zealous of good works ;' but who now told him Mr. Molther had fully convinced her she never had any faith at all, and had advised her to be *still*, ceasing from outward works. In the evening Bray, to whom his brother Charles owed so much, highly commended the *being still* before the Lord. This is the first time we meet with the name of Molther and the 'still' heresy which he introduced into the Society, causing the havoc which will presently be recounted. Molther was a Moravian minister who had recently arrived in London. Unable at first to speak in English, he ministered to the Society in Latin, with the aid of an interpreter. He soon, however, acquired the language sufficiently to be able to make himself understood, when, notwithstanding his imperfect English, he became exceedingly popular ; so much so that not only was the room, but also the courtyard, filled with eager listeners when he preached.

Wesley found Spangenberg also affected with the new opinions. He writes, 'Being greatly desirous to understand the ground of this matter, I had a long conference with Mr. Spangenberg. I agreed with all he said of the power of faith. I agreed that whosoever is, by faith, born of God doth not commit sin. But I could not agree, either that none has any faith so long as he is liable to any doubt or fear : or, that till we have it we ought to abstain from the Lord's Supper, or the other ordinances of God.'

On the following Sunday the Society met at seven o'clock in the morning, 'and continued silent till eight.' In the evening some of the brethren 'asserted in plain terms that till they had true faith they ought to be still; *i.e.* (as they explained) to abstain from the means of grace, as they are called; the Lord's Supper in particular; that the ordinances are not means of grace, there being no other means but Christ.' Wesley spent the week in an endeavour to counteract the evil, but with little result.

It was about this time that two gentlemen, Mr. Ball and Mr. Watkins, desired him to preach in a half-ruinous place called the Foundry, near Moorfields, and with much reluctance he at length complied. The purchase money was lent by these gentlemen and others, also what was needful to put the building in repair, and to fit it up for the Society's use. Two galleries, one for men and the other for women, were added, and one of the rooms was enlarged. Towards all these expenses, amounting in the whole to upwards of £800, liberal annual subscriptions were promised.¹

Wesley writes, 'Sunday, November 11, I preached at eight to five or six thousand, on the spirit of bondage, and the spirit of adoption; and at five in the evening to seven or eight thousand, in the place which had been the King's Foundry for cannon.' The company must have been assembled, either wholly or partially, in the yard, the building holding only fifteen hundred persons. It was an old and disused building, formerly the Government foundry where brass cannons were cast. A fearful accident in 1716, in connection with the re-casting of a number

¹ Whitehead, ii. 125.

of French guns, had laid the place in ruins, and it had not been used from that time until Wesley took it. It was the central home of Methodism from 1739 to 1778, when the present chapel in City Road, now called 'Wesley's Chapel,' was opened. The five o'clock morning services were for some time conducted by the Wesleys in a roofless building.¹

It will be seen that, as the separation of Wesley from the Moravians took place soon after, the acquisition of the Foundery was nearly coincident with the beginning of the distinctive 'United Societies of the Methodists.'

The Foundery is thus described :—

'It stood in the locality called "Windmill Hill," now known by the name of Windmill Street, a street that runs parallel with City Road, and abuts on the north-west corner of Finsbury Square. The building was placed on the east side of the street, some sixteen or eighteen yards from Providence Row ; and measured about forty yards in front, from north to south, and about thirty-three yards in depth, from east to west. There were two front doors, one leading to the chapel, and the other to the preacher's house, school, and bandroom. A bell was hung in a plain belfry, and was rung every morning at five o'clock for early service, and every evening at nine for family worship ; as well as at sundry other times. The chapel, which would accommodate some fifteen hundred people, was without pews ; but, on the ground floor, immediately before the pulpit, were about a dozen seats with back rails, appropriated to female worshippers. Under the front gallery were the free seats for women ; and, under the side galleries, the free seats for men. The front gallery was used exclusively by females, and the side galleries by males. "From the beginning," says Wesley, "the men and

¹ Stevenson, *History of City Road Chapel*.

women sat apart, as they always did in the primitive church; and none were suffered to call any place their own, but the first comers sat down first. They had no pews; and all the benches for rich and poor were of the same construction."

'The bandroom was behind the chapel, on the ground floor, some eighty feet long and twenty feet wide, and accommodated about three hundred persons. Here the classes met; here, in winter, the five o'clock morning service was conducted; and here were held, at two o'clock on Wednesdays and Fridays, weekly meetings for prayer and intercession. The north end of the room was used for a school, and was fitted up with desks; and at the south end was "The Book Room," for the sale of Wesley's publications.

'Over the bandroom were apartments for Wesley, in which his mother died; and, at the end of the chapel, was a dwelling-house for his domestics and assistant preachers.'

At the north end was an open yard, in which were the stable and coach-house; and at the south end, as represented by a contemporary engraving, there was a walled garden, having in it a few trees, giving the premises the appearance of country. The maps of London at that period show the open country all round. The land to the north-east of Moorgate was called Moorfields, and was divided into three portions, and laid out as pleasure-grounds. It was here that the great crowds gathered to listen to the mighty words of the Wesleys and Whitefield. It is said that the restoration of the old Foundery inspired public confidence, and some twenty years afterwards Finsbury Square and the streets leading thereto were laid out. During many years, the progress being slow, the roads were almost impassable. Yet the services were continued morning and evening; and it was a singular sight to witness the numerous candle and oil

lanterns moving over the rugged road to guide the worshippers safely during the dark winter mornings and evenings to the preachings of the Wesleys and their lay-helpers.

Here Wesley and some of his lay-assistants found a home ; and here his honoured mother spent her last days, attending their ministry, and enjoying the fellowship of the early Methodists. At this time she thus wrote to Charles :

‘ December 27, 1739.

‘ Your brother, whom I shall henceforth call *Son Wesley*, since my dear Sam is gone home, has just been with me, and much revived my spirits. Indeed, I have often found that he never speaks in my hearing without my receiving some spiritual benefit. But his visits are seldom and short ; for which I never blame him, because I know he is well employed, and, blessed be God, hath great success in his ministry. But, my dear Charles, still I want either him or you ; for, indeed, in the most literal sense, I am become a little child, and need continual succour. For these several days, I have had the conversation of many good Christians, who have refreshed, in some measure, my fainting spirits. I hope we shall shortly speak face to face. But then, alas ! when you come, your brother leaves me ! Yet that is the will of God, in whose blessed service you are engaged ; who has hitherto blessed your labours, and preserved your persons. That He may continue so to prosper your work, and protect you both from evil, and give you strength and courage to preach the true gospel, in opposition to the united powers of evil men and evil angels, is the hearty prayer of, dear Charles,

‘ Your loving mother,

‘ SUSANNAH WESLEY.’¹

¹ Adam Clarke’s *Wesley Family*, ii. 118.

During November he went down with Charles to Tiverton, where they found their widowed sister-in-law sorrowing almost as one without hope ; her husband, Samuel Wesley, having died on November 6, in the fiftieth year of his age. But Wesley, to his great comfort, learned from one who had attended his brother in his illness that, several days before his death, God had given him a calm and full assurance of his interest in Christ.

About this time, the end of this memorable year, he writes thus of Kingswood : ‘ Many last winter used to tauntingly say of Mr. Whitefield, “ If he will convert heathens, why does he not go to the colliers of Kingswood ? ”—described as a people famous for neither fearing God nor regarding man ; so ignorant of the things of God that they seemed but one remove from the beasts that perish ; and therefore utterly without desire of instruction, as well as without the means of it. He did so. And as there were thousands who resorted to no place of worship, he went after them into their own wilderness : when he was called away others went, and by the grace of God their labour was not in vain. The scene is already changed. Kingswood does not now, as a year ago, resound with cursing and blasphemy. It is no more filled with drunkenness and uncleanness, and the idle diversions that naturally lead thereto. Peace and love are there. Great numbers of the people are mild, gentle, and easy to be entreated. They do not cry, neither strive, and hardly is their voice heard in the streets ; or, indeed, in their own wood, unless when they are at their usual evening diversion, singing praise unto God their Saviour.’

‘On Friday, November 20, many of us joined in prayer,’ he says, ‘for one that was grievously tormented. She raged more and more for about two hours, and then our Lord gave her rest.’ While he was preaching the same evening, five were in a similar agony. He ordered them to be removed to the door, that their cries might neither drown his voice nor interrupt the attention of the congregation. But after the sermon they were brought into the room again, where a few continued in prayer with them till nine the next morning. Before that time, three of them sang praise to God, and ‘the others were eased, though not set at liberty.’ A few days after, he was again attacked by some who were exceedingly angry at those who so cried out ; being sure, they said, it was all a cheat, and that any one might help crying out if he would. About eight o’clock the next morning, when Joseph Black, one of those who were ‘sure’ of this, was alone in his chamber at private prayer, so horrible a dread overwhelmed him that he began crying out with all his might. All the family were alarmed. Several of them came running up into his chamber ; but he cried out so much the more, till his breath was utterly spent. ‘God then rebuked the adversary ; and he is now less wise in his own conceit.’

Wesley spent some days of December (8-18), in Oxford, where unpleasing tidings of the Society at Fetter Lane reached him ; and, hastening to London, with a heavy heart, he found the dreadful effects of reasonings and disputings. ‘Scarce one in ten,’ he says, ‘retained his first love, and the rest were in the utmost confusion’

On the last day of the year he had another long and particular conversation with Molther, and wrote down carefully the points of difference between them, particularly as to the nature of justifying faith, the way to it, the manner of propagating it, and the fruits of it. 'Respecting the way to faith,' he says, 'you believe that the way to attain it is to wait for Christ, and be still, *i.e.* not to use (what we term) the means of grace; not to go to church; not to communicate; not to fast; not to use so much private prayer; not to read the Scriptures (because you believe these are not means of grace; *i.e.* do not ordinarily convey God's grace to unbelievers; and that it is impossible for a man to use them without trusting in them); not to do temporal good; nor to attempt doing spiritual good; because you believe no fruit of the Spirit is given by those who have it not themselves; and that those who have not faith are utterly blind, and therefore unable to guide other souls.' On other particulars he showed how directly their views were opposed. It was obvious that such discordant opinions could not fail sooner or later to cause grievous division in the Society.

Wesley, moreover, saw that in the working out of these strange notions was involved the paralysis of all faith, and charity, and Christian activity. They had already produced the saddest effects in many of the societies, both in London and in different parts of the country. Some of the most hopeful of the converts were turned out of the way; the bonds of virtue were weakened, and not a few showed grievous spiritual degeneration, causing the acutest pain to the ardent evangelist. That the propagation of such

strange theories should work these sad results is not to be wondered at, when it is remembered that the converts had but recently been won from flagrant ungodliness, and had been brought up in utter ignorance of religious truth, and entirely without religious teaching and discipline. They were tender lambs, in whom the wolf of error found a ready prey.

This year is distinguished as the one from which the Methodist societies have always dated their origin. In the preface to the *Rules of the Society of the People called Methodists*, the following occurs : ‘ In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when all might come together ; which, from thence forward, they did every week, viz. on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), I gave those advices from time to time which I judged most needful for them ; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

‘ This was the rise of the UNITED SOCIETY, first in London, and then in other places. Such a society is no other than *a company of men, having the form, and seeking the power of godliness ; united, in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other*

to work out their salvation.' We learn that twelve came the first Thursday night, forty the next, the number growing soon after to a hundred.

We have already seen that Wesley names May 1, 1738, as the day when the third rise of Methodism began (*vide ante*, p. 190). This Foundery Society differed somewhat from that named above. It was more general in character, partaking of the nature of the religious societies around. A Methodist Society had been formed in Bristol, when, on April 4, 1739, as Wesley records, 'three women agreed to meet together weekly, with the same intention as those at London, viz. "To confess their faults one to another, and pray for one another, that they may be healed."' At eight four young men agreed to meet in pursuance of the same design.' 'In April I went down to Bristol. And soon after a few persons agreed to meet weekly, with the same intention as those in London. These were swiftly increased, by the union of several little societies, which were till then accustomed to meet in divers parts of the city, but now agreed to unite together in one.¹ These separate rills ran together to form the one United Society of the People called Methodists, which thus dates from the year 1739.

In this year also the employment of lay-preachers was initiated. Wesley, writing in 1790, says that Joseph Humphreys was the first lay-preacher that assisted him in England, in 1738. In what place and to what extent Humphreys was employed we do not know. It may have been, as Tyerman suggests, in connection with the Fetter Lane Society. Humphreys became a Calvinist, joined Whitefield, was afterwards

¹ Wesley's *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. iv. p. 176.

a Presbyterian minister, and later on received Episcopal ordination.

John Cennick, whom, it will be remembered, Wesley had already met at Reading, in a fragment of very pathetic autobiography, tells how, when he was at Bristol, he went on June 14, 1739, to Kingswood to hear a young man (Tyerman queries Thomas Maxfield, but gives no reason for doing so) read a sermon to the colliers; but, the young man not appearing, Cennick was persuaded to expound—a work he had never before attempted. Some four or five hundred colliers were assembled under the sycamore tree near which the foundation-stone of the school had been hastily laid by Whitefield, and ‘many believed in that hour.’ This he repeated the following day; and two days after he preached to about four thousand people. About this time Wesley returned to Bristol, where he remained till July 13. He was urged by some to stop Cennick, but, so far from complying, he encouraged him in his work. Cennick, who had been a writing-master at Reading, was soon after appointed to reside in Kingswood and to take charge of the new school there. He continued to preach at Kingswood and in the neighbouring villages with great effect, occasionally supplying for Wesley in Bristol. But about Christmas, 1740, Cennick, having embraced Calvinistic views, renounced his connection with Wesley.

Wesley says, ‘A young man, Thomas Maxfield,¹

¹ Often erroneously spoken of as Wesley’s first lay-preacher, though his conversion did not take place until about three weeks before Cennick preached at Kingswood, and there is no evidence of Maxfield’s actually preaching until nearly six months after Cennick’s first attempt.

and then another, Thomas Richards, and a little after a third, Thomas Westell, offered to serve me as sons, and to labour when and where I should direct.’¹ This may have been at the latter end of 1739, or, as Myles, an early historian of Methodism, says,² ‘probably in the beginning of 1740.’

The following interesting story relating to Maxfield, which may have given rise to the supposition that he was Wesley’s first lay-preacher, is preserved by Moore, Wesley’s intimate friend, biographer, and last surviving trustee. The Society in London had deeply suffered from erroneous teaching, in Wesley’s absence, and the want of an assistant, acting in a capacity similar to that of Cennick at Bristol, was keenly felt. Wesley, therefore, when about to leave London for a season, appointed Thomas Maxfield to take charge of the Society, and to expound the Scriptures to them.

‘This young man, being fervent in spirit and mighty in the Scriptures, greatly profited the people. They crowded to hear him ; and, by the increase of their number, as well as by their earnest and deep attention, they insensibly led him to go further than he had at first designed. He began to *preach*, and the Lord so blessed the word that many were not only awakened, and brought to repentance, but were also made happy in a consciousness of pardon. Some, however, were offended at this “irregularity.” A formal complaint was made to Mr. Wesley, and he hastened to London, in order to put a stop to it. His mother then lived in his house, adjoining the Foundry. When he arrived, she perceived that his countenance was expressive of dissatisfaction, and inquired the cause. “Thomas Maxfield,”

¹ *Works*, vii. 277.

² *Chronological History of Methodism*, 1st ed., p. 10.

said he, abruptly, "has turned preacher, I find." She looked attentively at him, and replied, "John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach, as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself." He did so. His prejudice bowed before the force of truth, and he could only say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." ¹

The date of this occurrence is not given. It could not have been earlier than the end of 1739, or the beginning of 1740; most likely the latter, for Mrs. Wesley was a resident at the Foundery at the time; and the tumble-down building was not offered to Wesley until November, after which some weeks must have elapsed before his mother was able to take up her abode there.

Lady Huntingdon, at this time, was a constant attendant at Fetter Lane, and a member of the first society formed there. Having frequently heard Mr. Maxfield pray, she at length urged him to expound the Scriptures. She was greatly impressed, and wrote to Wesley expressing her astonishment. 'Before he had gone over one-fifth part any one that had seen me would have thought I had been made of wood or stone; so quite immovable I both felt and looked. To deal plainly, I could either talk or write for an hour about him.'

After he had laboured faithfully and successfully in London for a few years, he was episcopally ordained by the Bishop of Derry, in Bristol, at Wesley's

¹ *Life of Wesley*, i. 505.

particular recommendation. The Bishop, addressing Maxfield, said, 'Sir, I ordain you to assist that good man, that he may not work himself to death.'

After being Wesley's helper for several years in London, he withdrew from him, to Wesley's great regret. He afterwards had a large chapel near Moorfields, and after labouring with great success, he died suddenly of apoplexy.¹

Maxfield was not the only lay-preacher whom Wesley was disposed to repress. Moore tells us, 'Thomas Westall was a simple, upright man, whose word the Lord greatly blessed. Wesley at first thought [as in the case of Thomas Maxfield] to silence him. But Mrs. Canning, a pious old lady of Evesham, said, "Stop him at your peril! He preaches the truth, and the Lord owns him as truly as he does you or your brother."' ²

Although his irrepressible energy and equally irrepressible zeal were pushing him out into the wide fields of heathenish England, fields that were white indeed unto harvest, yet it is obvious that no such extension of his labours as he desired could have been effected without the adoption of some means adapted to meet the requirements of the time. It was Wesley's claim that he followed the leadings of Providence as indicated in the circumstances of the hour. He laid down no plan, but was content simply to be led to enter doors as they opened, and to adopt measures as they became expedient. This is strikingly illustrated in the case of the lay-preachers. The strength of Wesley's prejudice against them is indicated in his

¹ *Life of Lady Huntingdon*, i. 33, 34.

² *Life of Wesley*, ii. 11.

own assertion, 'I scarce thought it right for one to be saved out of church,' which showed his objection to anything that was irregular. And we have seen that prejudice prompting him to oppose them in two striking instances, and the rude shocks which that prejudice then received. But he had witnessed the work of the Moravians in Georgia, and, during his visit to Herrnhut, he had listened attentively to the preaching of Christian David, a Moravian mechanic, and had seen abundant proofs of his great usefulness. Compelled, then, by the necessity of the case, and by the obvious indications of Divine Providence, he at length yielded, though he took no step in his whole progress so reluctantly as this. That he carefully pondered the path of his feet in this matter is abundantly evident from the elaborate defence of the lay-helpers given in one of his ablest works—the *Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion*—from which the following is extracted :—

[After declaring that of the employment of these men he had not only no more foresight than his objectors had, but also he had the deepest prejudices against it, until he 'could not but own that God gave wisdom from above to these unlettered and ignorant men (as many called them), so that the work of the Lord prospered in their hands, and sinners were daily converted to God,' he goes on to say]

'Indeed, in the one thing which they profess to know, they are not ignorant men. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination, in substantial, practical, experimental Divinity, as few of our candidates for holy orders, even in the University (I speak it with sorrow and shame, and in tender love) are able to do.'

"' But they are laymen.'" [After pointing out that from

the earliest times laymen had preached in the churches, he thus continues], 'But I do not rest the cause on these. I believe it may be defended in a shorter way. It pleased God, by two or three ministers of the Church of England, to call many sinners to repentance; who, in several parts, were undeniably turned from a course of sin to a course of holiness. The ministers of the places where this was done ought to have received those ministers with open arms; and to have taken them who had just begun to serve God into their peculiar care, watching over them in tender love, lest they should fall back into the snare of the devil. Instead of this, the greater part spoke of those ministers as if the devil, not God, had sent them. Some repelled them from the Lord's table; others stirred up the people against them, representing them, even in their public discourses, as fellows not fit to live, papists, heretics, traitors, conspirators against their king and country.

'And how did they watch over the sinners lately reformed? Even as a leopard watcheth over his prey. They drove some of them also from the Lord's table; to which till now they had no desire to approach. They preached all manner of evil concerning them, openly cursing them in the name of the Lord. They turned many out of their work; persuaded others to do so too, and harassed them all manner of ways. The event was, that some were wearied out, and so turned back to their vomit again. And then these good pastors gloried over them, and endeavoured to shake others by their example.

'When the ministers by whom God had helped them before came again to those places, great part of their work was to begin again (if it could be begun again); but the relapsers were often so hardened in sin that no impression could be made upon them. What could they do in a case of so extreme necessity, where many souls lay at stake?

'No clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was, to find some one among themselves, who was

upright of heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God; and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them, as he was able, in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation.

‘God immediately gave a blessing hereto. In several places, by means of these plain men, not only those who had begun to run well were hindered from drawing back to perdition; but other sinners also, from time to time, were converted from the error of their ways.

‘This plain account of the whole proceeding’ [he adds], ‘I take to be the best defence of it. I know no Scripture which forbids making use of such help, in a case of such necessity. And I praise God, who has given even this help to those poor sheep, when “their own shepherds pitied them not.”’

It was further objected, ‘Does not the Scripture say, “No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron?”’ ‘Nor do these,’ he replied. ‘The honour here mentioned is the priesthood. But they no more take upon them to be priests than to be kings. They do not take upon them to administer the Sacraments—an honour peculiar to the priests of God. Only, according to their power, they exhort their brethren to continue in the grace of God.’

It is further urged, ‘But for these laymen to exhort at all is a violation of all order.’ Wesley inquires, ‘What is this order of which you speak? Will it serve instead of the knowledge and love of God? Will this order rescue those from the snare of the devil who are now taken captive at his will? Will it keep them who are escaped a little way from turning back into Egypt? If not, how should I answer it to God, if, rather than violate I know not what order, I should sacrifice thousands of souls thereto? I dare not do it. It is at the peril of my own soul.’¹

¹ *Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*.—*Works*, viii, 220–225.

On such lines as these he continued to the end of his life to vindicate the character of his helpers, and his own action in calling them to his aid in the great work to which he believed himself to have been called.

Wesley's labours during the year were not all comprised in those frequent preaching services, often to vast multitudes of people, which we have been hastily reviewing; in his private ministry to the numerous persons who applied to him for spiritual instruction, his expounding to the societies night after night, and his special care of the Fetter Lane Society; or in his journeyings backwards and forwards, to and from London, Bristol, and Oxford. His pen was also in requisition. He had already begun to use the press, his largest work hitherto published being two beautiful editions of Thomas à Kempis's *Christian Pattern*, one in octavo, with a preface on the usefulness of the work, directions for reading it with profit, and an account of the edition itself; the other, a most handy little pocket-edition. 'It is a closer translation of the original than any hitherto published, being as literal as was consistent with elegance, and divided, like the Latin, into distinct sentences: thus differing from Dean Stanhope's, the one then generally in use.' During the year he published, in addition to the works already mentioned the famous *Sermon on Free Grace*, which was the proximate cause of the separation between Whitefield and himself; an abridgment of August Hermann Franke's *Nicodemus: A Treatise on the Fear of Man*. This year also saw the issue of the first number of the *Extracts from Mr. Wesley's Journal*, relating to the time from his embarking for

Georgia, to his return to London ; and *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, a volume of 249 pages. The special interest of this volume lies in the fact that it is the first in which any of Charles Wesley's hymns appeared, —the bubblings of a spring which was to become a rich stream of holy song, carrying its refreshing waters to many a spiritual wilderness, reviving many a weary pilgrim, and stimulating many a band of holy workers ; songs that by their sweetness should win back many a wandering one from his evil ways, giving hope to the hopeless, and reviving faith in many a heart chilled by cruel doubt ; songs that should give expression to the holy joy, the reverent worship and the fervent aspiration of millions of believers, and on which, as on eagles' wings, unnumbered triumphant believers would ascend to the paradise of God.

All through this year the press was also much employed in printing attacks upon Methodism and the Methodists. Of the numerous pamphlets, and letters, and articles in the journals of the day, which appeared, the greater number were directed against Whitefield, who answered several. Wesley replied but to one or two.¹

Wesley had spent most of the previous year at Bristol. It ended amidst the darkening shadows of the 'still' controversy ; and the first business of the new year was an endeavour on his part to explain to the brethren 'the true Christian, Scriptural stillness, by largely unfolding those solemn words, "Be still, and know that I am God."'

Having earnestly besought the brethren to stand

¹ For an account of these see Rev. R. Green, *Anti-Methodist Publications in the Eighteenth Century*. London. Kelly, 1902.

in the old paths, he left London for Oxford, where he took the opportunity to examine the letters he had received in the preceding sixteen or eighteen years ; and was surprised, he says, to find 'how few traces of inward religion they revealed.'

Coming once more to Bristol, he at once began to expound the Scriptures in order, at six o'clock in the morning, by which means many more attended the College [*i.e.* the Cathedral] prayers that followed than had done before. He afterwards, on Tuesday, March 25, commenced holding service at five o'clock in the morning—a practice which he maintained to the end of his life.

Preaching excursions were also made to the villages around ; to Downend, Siston, Bridgegate, and Westerleigh. These are his early essays in the extension of the work beyond the confines of London and Bristol—the presage of a far wider expansion, the consideration of which will presently claim our attention.

Finding many poor people in the last extremity of destitution, being out of employment in consequence of a severe frost, he collected money, and for a time fed from a hundred to a hundred and fifty daily. He was abruptly summoned to London, where he remained until the end of the month ; and during his stay had a prolonged conference with the leaders of the Moravians, whom he esteemed very highly in love, but could not understand on the one point of 'Christian openness and plainness of speech.' He was beset with complaints that many of the brethren had not only left off the ordinances of God themselves, but were continually troubling

and disputing with others, whether they would or not.

Leaving London at the beginning of March, he found the troublers had been at Reading also. Coming to Bristol, he makes this striking comment upon the different manner in which the work of God proceeded at this time from what was observable in the last year. 'Then it was poured along like a rapid overwhelming flood ; whereas this year

' He deigns His influence to infuse
Secret, refreshing as the silent dews.

Convictions,' he says, 'sink deeper and deeper ; and love and joy are more calm, even, and steady. In many the axe is laid to the root of the trees, who can have no rest in their spirits till they are fully renewed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness.'

Being urged to visit a soldier in the Bristol Bridewell under sentence of death, he went once a day, thus gaining an opportunity of speaking the gospel of peace to many desolate ones confined in the same place. After several visits the poor man found rest to his soul. The next day, the commanding officer gave strict orders, 'Neither Mr. Wesley, nor any of his people should be admitted, for *they were all atheists.*'

He now encountered a fresh form of opposition. A fierce mob for several nights strove to disturb him and his fellow-worshippers in the Horsefair room. 'It seemed as if all the host of the aliens were come together with one consent. Not only the court and the alleys, but all the street upwards and downwards

was filled with people shouting, cursing, and swearing, and ready to swallow the ground with fierceness and rage.' But by wise and energetic action the Mayor succeeded in quelling the disturbance. In less than a fortnight afterwards he learnt that one of the chief of the rioters had hanged himself; another, in great pain, had sent to the Society many times, asking for their prayers; and a third came to Wesley, and confessed he was hired and made drunk for the purpose, but when he came to the door he could neither stir nor open his mouth.

At the pressing invitation of Howel Harris, he again set out for Wales, preaching at Lanvachas, Pontypool, and Llanhithel, reading prayers and preaching at Llanhithel Church, and at Cardiff. The day following, after preaching thrice, he came to Watford, 'where a few joined together in prayer and in provoking one another to love and good works.' He preached also at Lantarnam Church and at Penreul, where a few were cut to the heart. At a third service, there was 'a shaking indeed,' three or four coming to him in such mourning as he had hardly ever seen; and between eleven and twelve o'clock at night came a poor drunkard, who was convinced by the word spoken in the early part of the week.

The next day, preaching at Lanvachas on his way, he returned to Bristol. On this journey Wesley preached in three of the Welsh churches, but in no other church during the year.

He received letters from London informing him that the brethren in Fetter Lane were again in great confusion, and earnestly desiring that if possible he

would come without delay, which he did. He was told that all the confusion was owing to his brother, 'who would preach up the ordinances.'

After two hours of ineffectual disputing with the Society, he returned home with a heavy heart. In the evening they met again, 'cold, weary, heartless, dead; no brotherly love among them now, but a harsh, dry, heavy spirit.' Within two days he spoke with more than thirty persons, who had been strongly solicited 'to deny they had ever had living faith, to be *still* till they had it, to leave off all means of grace, not to go to church, not to communicate, not to read the Scriptures, not to use private prayer, at least not so *much*, not *vocally*, or not at any stated times.'

Things had reached a point at which it seemed urgently desirable that he and his brother should wait on Molther, with whom they spent two hours; Wesley explicitly affirming the things against which the Molther party objected. Ten or twelve persons, and more the next day, spoke of the trouble into which they had been thrown by this 'new gospel.' Indeed, wherever he went, he found proofs of the grievous confusion it had caused, many coming to him who were once full of peace and love, but now were again plunged into doubt and fear, and were at their wits' end.

Utterly at a loss what course to take, and finding no rest, Wesley went to his former friend, the Rev. George Stonehouse, of Islington, but, to his great sorrow, found that he also had come under the influence of the 'still' teaching.¹ He went to his

¹ 'The Rev. George Stonehouse, Vicar of Islington, was converted in 1738, chiefly through the instrumentality of Charles Wesley, who,

own little Society at the Foundery, which had stood untainted from the beginning; but the plague was now spread to them also.

After endeavouring to correct the evil by publicly explaining the Scriptures that had been misunderstood, and by trying in private conversation to win back those who had been led astray, he left London, and returned to Bristol. Here for a week he was greatly refreshed. But he was soon again disturbed by another strange physical manifestation, several persons being overcome by an irresistible spirit of laughter. He says, 'I could scarce have believed the account they gave me, had I not known the same thing ten or eleven years ago. Part of Sunday my brother and I then used to spend in walking in the meadows and singing psalms. But one day, just as we were beginning to sing, he burst out into a loud laughter. I asked him, "if he was distracted?" and began to be very angry, and presently after to laugh as loud as he. Nor could we possibly refrain, though we were ready to tear ourselves in pieces, but we were forced to go home without singing another line.' Some days after, in the evening, the same strange affection appeared amongst the members again, to such a degree that many were greatly offended.

The spirit of violent opposition which had recently

for a time, officiated as his curate. Many were the warm-hearted meetings held by the first Methodists in the Vicar's house. His affection for the two Wesleys was great; and, in November, 1738, when they were forsaken by all their friends, and well-nigh penniless, he offered to find them home and maintenance. Imbibing Molther's heresies, he sold his living, joined the Moravians, and retired to Sherborne, in the west of England.'—Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, i. 305.

begun to manifest itself in Bristol appeared again while he was preaching at Upton, where some rang bells and made all the noise they could; but his voice prevailed, so that most of those present heard the word. The following day he visited one of the poor colliers, who was ill of the small-pox; but the man's soul was full of peace, and a day or two after returned to the God who gave it. This was one of the early instances of the happy deaths that characterized the Methodists, and called forth from their great psalmist the jubilant songs in which they gave expression to their joyous hope of everlasting life.

On Sunday, June 1, he preached at Kingswood in the morning, and in the evening at Rose Green, to six or seven thousand. Then, as he was about to leave them for a time, he exhorted the Society to be diligent in prayer, and not to faint in their minds, and came by Avon and Malmsbury, where he preached, to Oxford, and reached London on the 5th. Finding that a general temptation prevailed to 'leave off good works in order to an increase of faith,' he began to expound the Epistle of St. James, 'the great antidote against this poison.'

On Friday the 13th, he says, 'a great part of *our* Society joined with us in prayer, and kept, I trust, an acceptable fast unto the Lord.' This was the little Methodist Society that now met apart from the one at Fetter Lane.

On the 18th, Charles Wesley, who, during most of the time his brother was in Oxford, had preached with great earnestness and power to multitudes in

and around London, and had laboured hard, together with Thomas Maxfield, amongst the several societies, now left for Bristol. At six in the evening, John preached in Marylebone Fields, much against his will. He says, 'All were quiet, and the greater part deeply attentive.' Thence he went to Fetter Lane, where his faithful friend Ingham¹ bore a noble testimony to the ordinances of God, and the reality of even weak faith.

Finding there was no time for delay, he began to execute what he had long designed—'to strike at the root of the grand delusion.' Through the week he gave a series of carefully prepared addresses on the points at issue, and on each night of the week he dealt at length on all the questions involved. On the following Sunday, even in Moorfields and at Kennington, he enforced the Apostolic direction that they that had believed be careful to maintain good works. During the ensuing fortnight he strenuously endeavoured to convince the members of 'the poor Society' of their errors; but it was all in vain. They clung to their opinions, and at last one asked, 'Whether they would suffer Mr. Wesley to preach at Fetter Lane?' After a short debate, it

¹ The Rev. Benjamin Ingham was born at Ossett, in 1712. He entered Queen's College, Oxford, and became a Methodist. He accompanied Wesley to Georgia, sharing his desire to be a missionary to the Indians. On his return to Yorkshire, he was prohibited from preaching in any of the churches in the diocese. He was therefore driven to preach in the open air. He was very successful, and many societies were formed. He afterwards joined the Moravians, and the societies became a Moravian settlement in Yorkshire. He married Lady Margaret Hastings. He ultimately separated from the Moravians, and formed a society known as the Inghamite Connexion, of which a small remnant remains. He died in 1772.

was answered, 'No; this place is taken for the Germans.'

On Friday, July 18, Wesley says, 'A few of us joined with my mother in the great sacrifice of thanksgiving; and then consulted how to proceed with regard to our poor brethren at Fetter Lane. Lady Huntingdon was also present. We all saw the thing was now come to a crisis, and were therefore unanimously agreed what to do.'¹ Accordingly, on the following Sunday, he went in the evening to the love-feast in Fetter Lane; at the conclusion of which he read a paper to the following effect:

'About nine months ago, certain of you began to speak contrary to the doctrine we had till then received; the sum of what you asserted is this:

'1. That there is no such thing as weak faith; that there is no justifying faith, where there is ever any doubt or fear, or where there is not, in the full sense, a new, a clean heart.

'2. That a man ought not to use those ordinances of God, which our Church terms means of grace, before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, a clean heart.

'You have often affirmed, that to search the Scriptures, to pray, or to communicate, before we have this faith, is to seek salvation by works; and that till these works are laid aside no man can receive faith.

'I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the Word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the Law and the Testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of

¹ *Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, i. 36.

your ways, nothing now remains, but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment, follow me.'

He adds, 'I then, without saying anything more, withdrew, as did eighteen or nineteen of the Society.' Lady Huntingdon and Charles Wesley's friend, Mr. Seward, were in the company.¹

On the following Wednesday, July 23, the little company of seceders met at the Foundery, instead of at Fetter Lane. To them were joined about five and twenty members of Wesley's own little Methodist Society, 'all of whom think and speak the same thing,' together with seven or eight and forty of the fifty women that were in the 'Band' societies.

Thus closed Wesley's association with the Moravians; a people for whom he had entertained the liveliest affection, to whom he ever acknowledged his deep indebtedness, and with whom, if the simplicity of Christian life, spirit, and doctrine of his first associates had remained untainted by false mystical teachings, he would gladly have continued in fellowship to the end of his days.

¹ Hutton (*Memoirs*, p. 54) says, 'In June, 1740, he [Wesley] formed his Foundery Society, in opposition to the one which met at Fetter Lane, and which had become a Moravian Society. William Seward, a native of Badsey, near Evesham, was a man of independent means, who became acquainted with Charles Wesley and the Methodists in 1738, and in November of that year found peace with God through faith in Christ. He accompanied Whitefield on his second voyage to America, in 1739. There he remained a year. On returning to England he joined Howel Harris in one of his evangelistic tours, when he met with very brutal treatment. At Caerleon he was struck on the eye with some hard substance, causing the loss of sight. At Hay he was struck on the head so severely that he died a few days afterwards, on October 22, 1740; the first, but not the only Methodist martyr.'

It is right to say that Wesley entirely exculpates the Moravian Church from the charge of holding the 'still' doctrines. He says, 'This doctrine, from the beginning to this day, has been taught as [being] the doctrine of the Moravian Church. I think, therefore, it is my bounden duty to clear the Moravians from this aspersion, because I am, perhaps, the only person now in England that both can and will do it.' He attributes the teaching to 'certain men who crept in among them unawares, about September, 1739, while he and his brother were absent.'¹ It was not the Moravian *Church* that held these views, but certain leading members and officers of it—Molther, Spangenberg, Bray, and others.²

Tyerman, as we have seen, is plainly in error in naming this as the date of the founding of the Methodist Society. It simply marks the time of Wesley's separation from that of Fetter Lane, which then became wholly Moravian, and has continued to be so to this day. Fetter Lane is now the centre of the British province of the highly honoured Moravian, or United Brethren's, Church, whose widespread Christian activities, purity of doctrine, fervour of missionary zeal, and noble and heroic sacrifice are the admiration of all the Evangelical churches.

Wesley's separation from the Moravians marks an epoch in his career. Hitherto, since his first association with them on his outward voyage to Georgia, he has been led by them, yielding himself

¹ *Works*, i. 81.

² 'I speak of the simple and artless part of their congregations. As for the teachers in their Church, it is my solemn belief (I speak it with grief and reluctance), that they are no better than a kind of Protestant Jesuits.'—*Works*, ii. 30.

with a childlike simplicity to the control of what he judged to be their riper wisdom in spiritual matters. The fourth section of his *Journal*, from November, 1739 to September, 1741, which includes the account of the separation, he did not publish till 1744. In the preface, which is dedicated to the 'Moravian Church, more especially that part of it now or lately residing in England,' he states that he had delayed its publication because he loved them, and because he was afraid of creating another obstacle to that union, which (if he knew anything of his own heart) he desired above all things under heaven. He felt, however, at length compelled to speak his sentiments concerning them.

While he felt he must, on grave accounts, maintain his independence of the Moravians, he nevertheless cherished a longing desire to renew his fellowship with them. After meeting Peter Böhler again some little time subsequent to the separation, Wesley wrote, 'I marvel how I refrain from joining these men. I scarce ever see any of them but my heart burns within me. I long to be with them ; and yet I am kept from them.' Southey, whom Alexander Knox—himself personally acquainted with Wesley—afterwards convinced of his mistake, is wrong in assigning ambition, on Wesley's part, as the chief reason why he could not longer work harmoniously with the Moravians. Wesley wrote long after, 'There cannot be a greater mistake than this, that I ever did stand out, or that I do so now. There has not been one day for these seven years last past, wherein my soul has not longed for union,' and he declares that 'the body of the Moravian Church, however mistaken

some of them are, are in the main, of all whom I have seen, the best Christians in the world.' ¹

Wesley, now separated from the Moravians, henceforth stood alone, thrown upon his own initiative in all his future movements. Whatever advantages he may have gained from his association with them are sacrificed; but he is loosed from bonds that might have restricted him in the great work to which he is destined, and he is freed from the troublous controversies that for some time had weighed so heavily on his spirits, and hampered him in his labours.

The new era opened with a cheerful record. 'At St. Luke's [Old Street, City Road], our parish church,' he says, 'was such a sight as I believe was never seen there before; several hundred communicants, from whose very faces one might judge that they indeed sought Him that was crucified.' The fruits of his labours, and of those of his brother, were not all gathered into their own Society, nor were they all to be found amongst the Moravians. They were also to be seen in the various religious societies, where the brothers still frequently expounded, and in the different parish churches of London.

The assaults which were being made upon the sins of the people were not unattended with difficulty. Opposition in various forms was now beginning to manifest itself. At Long Lane many came to make a disturbance, and put forth a vile woman to begin. 'The instant she broke out,' Wesley says, 'I turned full upon her, and declared the love our Lord had for her soul. We then prayed that He would

¹ *Journal*, September 8, 1746.

confirm the word of His grace. She was struck to the heart, and shame covered her face. From her I turned to the rest, who melted away like water, and were as men that had no strength.'

He earnestly warned all who had tasted the grace of God, 'Not to think they were justified before they had a clear assurance that God had forgiven their sins, bringing with it a calm peace, the love of God, and dominion over sin. And then not to think themselves anything, but to press forward to be thoroughly renewed in righteousness and true holiness.' These were two central themes in all his teaching.

Forty or fifty of those who were seeking salvation desired leave to spend the night together, at the Society room in the Foundry, in prayer and giving thanks. Before ten o'clock he left them and lay down, but found no settled sleep. Between two and three in the morning he was waked, and entreated to come downstairs, where loud and bitter cries were heard, which increased when he came into the room and began to pray. But in a short time 'God heard from His holy place.' Sorrow and sighing fled away, and were succeeded by songs of praise. His labours at this time were very great, with his numerous visits to the sick or mournful, his assiduous attention to the societies, and his frequent public services. But, happily, disputes were at an end, at least for a time, and work was only a joy.

On a Sunday in the October following, on his return home from his afternoon service at Kennington, a mob was gathered about the Foundry door, and he had no sooner stepped out of the coach than they quite closed

him in. He immediately began to speak to those who were nearest to him, of righteousness and judgment to come. At first not many heard, the noise being so great ; but gradually the silence spread farther and farther, till he had a quiet, attentive congregation ; and when he left them, they all showed him much love, and dismissed him with a blessing. Two days afterwards many more, coming in among the people 'like lions, in a short space became as lambs ; the tears trickling down their cheeks, who at first most loudly contradicted and blasphemed.' Two days later a similar scene occurred. While he was reading a chapter from the Acts, a great number of men made their way into the middle of the room, and began to speak 'big swelling words,' so that his voice could hardly be heard. 'But,' he says, 'immediately after, the hammer of the Word brake the rock in pieces : all quietly heard the glad tidings of salvation, and some, I trust, not in vain.'

As it was almost impossible for him to secure retirement in London, he went to his friend Piers's, at Bexley,¹ where morning and evening he expounded the Sermon on the Mount, and had leisure during the rest of the day for business of other kinds. He afterwards embodied his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount in thirteen discourses, which were included in his early volumes of sermons. They are perhaps the most beautiful examples of ethical teaching he

¹ The Rev. Henry Piers, the pious Vicar of Bexley, was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He and his wife were brought to the knowledge of the truth under the ministry of Charles Wesley. To the end of his life he was the firm friend of both the brothers. He was a member of Wesley's first Conference, in 1744. He died at Bexley in 1769, after thirty-three years' faithful ministry.

ever penned, and are the best reply to the charge that Methodism had no ethical message. On going to his home in the evening, at the close of a heavy Sabbath's work, he again found 'an innumerable mob round the door, who opened all their throats' the moment they saw him. Desiring the friends who were with him to go into the house, he walked into the midst of the people, proclaiming *the name of the Lord, gracious, and merciful, and who repenteth him of the evil*. They stood staring at one another. He continued to speak to them, and then exhorted them to join him in prayer. To this they agreed, and he afterwards went undisturbed to the waiting company within.

Two days later, whilst he was preaching, a young man rushed in with others, cursing and swearing vehemently, and so disturbed all near him that they put him out. Wesley, noticing this, called to them to let the young man come in. At the close of the sermon, the intruder declared before them all that he was a smuggler, then going to his evil work. But he now resolved to take the Lord for his God, and to follow his nefarious practices no more. On another Sunday, while Wesley was explaining the difference between being called a Christian and being one indeed, the madness of the people was overcome, so that in a short time they were quiet and attentive and remained so to the end. Once again, while he was preaching, many who were gathered for the purpose endeavoured by shouting to drown his voice, but he 'turned upon them immediately, and offered them deliverance from their hard master.' The Word, he tells us, sank deep into their hearts, and they were silent.

One of the places of public resort, and of evil fame, was Short's Gardens in Drury Lane ; thither he went, and, to publicans and sinners gathered together, began declaring that gospel of Christ which is the power of God even unto the salvation of such hearers.

On the following Sunday, he says, ' While I was enforcing that great question, with an eye to the spiritual resurrection, " Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ? " the many-headed beast began to roar again. I again proclaimed deliverance to the captives, and their deep attention showed that the Word sent to them did not return empty.'

Thus he began to encounter the violence of rude, unbridled mobs, and learned his power to meet and silence them. This power was remarkable, for he was but short in stature, and it was, as we shall see again and again, heroically displayed in subsequent days, under circumstances of the greatest peril.

The winter of 1740-41 being unusually severe, he set himself to beg clothes from those who could spare them, distributing them amongst the numerous poor of the Society.

Hastening to Bristol, always a journey of two days, to supply the place of his brother, who had gone into Wales on a preaching tour, he spent nine or ten days in speaking personally with as many as he could, also in visiting numbers of sick persons, many of them suffering from ' spotted fever ' (probably typhus, or gaol fever), which had of late been extremely fatal among the Bristol people.

On his return to London, after a fortnight's

absence, he found many persons out of work. To meet their wants he engaged a teacher, and taking twelve of the most needy into the Society room, he employed them for four months in carding and spinning cotton ; thus both occupying them in useful toil and maintaining them through the cold winter months, at little cost above the produce of their labour.

Many of the Society had grown offended with each other. He brought the accused and accusers face to face, and in the course of the week most of the offences vanished away.

The *Journals* show that Wesley had frequent occasion to adjust differences, and to exercise discipline amongst the members of his societies. But this will not be thought surprising, nor will it be any reason for disparaging the reality of the work of the Revival, when it is remembered from what low conditions of life and morals most of them had been rescued, and for how short a time they had been subject to any religious restraint and training ; and when, further, it is borne in mind that their daily surroundings were most unfavourable to growth in goodness.

Many displeasing accounts concerning the Society at Kingswood reached him. He therefore left London ; and, with considerable difficulty and some danger, by reason of much ice in the ill-made and ill-kept roads, he came again to Bristol, where his brother confirmed the painful reports. He went at once to Kingswood, in the hope of repairing the breaches that had been made in the Society. He began by expounding the Lord's Sermon on the Mount at the morning and evening services, labouring in the

daytime to heal the jealousies and misunderstandings that had arisen. The root of the evil revealed itself when, going to meet his friend Cennick, who was returning from a short journey, and desiring to receive him as usual with open arms, he found to his great surprise that Cennick was 'quite cold, so that a stranger would have judged he had never seen me before.' On the following day Cennick told him he could not agree with him any longer, because Wesley did not preach the truth; in particular, with regard to election. Wesley says significantly, 'We then entered a little into the controversy, but without effect.' He found some comfort, however, on the following Sunday evening at the love-feast in Bristol, where seventy or eighty of the Kingswood Society were present. They all returned home together through the knee-deep snow, in the most violent storm of snow and sleet he could remember; but their hearts were warm, and they rejoiced and praised God for the consolation.

In five days, however, he went to preach at the early morning service at Kingswood, when he had to record, 'My congregation was gone to hear Mr. C[ennick], so that, except a few from Bristol, I had not above two or three men, and as many women; the same number I had had once or twice before.'

Here we see the first streak of what was to become a dark cloud overshadowing him for many years—the first indication of what would prove to be one of his heaviest trials; although in meeting it he was to achieve one of his greatest triumphs.

The last hours of the year found the members of the Society with their love greatly confirmed towards

each other. And, the house being filled from end to end, they 'concluded the year, wrestling with God in prayer, and praising Him for the wonderful work which he had already wrought upon earth.'

We have now reached a point in Wesley's career when it may be advantageous to pause. We have traced his interesting personal history from his birth to his thirty-eighth year, and, designedly, with some minuteness. We have followed the course of his prolonged spiritual struggle, his final emancipation from gloomy uncertainty, and his entrance into the full enjoyment of the gospel salvation. We have marked his first efforts to promote the moral and spiritual regeneration of his fellow-countrymen, and we have seen the first examples of violent opposition to his work from fierce and brutal mobs. We have witnessed the beginning of the field-preaching; the foundation of the Society; and the partial employment of lay-preachers—the specially distinguishing features of his method. These must all be regarded as preparatory stages in his progress towards the one supreme work of his life—the greatest, the most conspicuous, the most fruitful of all the services rendered by him to the spiritual upheaval of the eighteenth century, namely, his *fifty years of unbroken itinerant preaching*, forming one continuous appeal to the conscience of the English nation. Whatever else Wesley may have done, this work rises above all. He may have been distinguished as a successful organizer, as a voluminous writer, as the founder of various benevolent institutions; but his chief, his unapproachable, work was his prolonged appeal to the English people.

For the accomplishment of such a work no device could equal the field-preaching ; indeed, but for this, there is no probability that the contemplated end could have been attained. No other means could approach it in fitness for reaching the godless, indifferent masses of the people. It brought him face to face with thousands upon thousands of persons who never entered the churches. By this means he met with the brutal and the careless, as well as with the starving and thirsting ones. Without effort, without will, often in opposition to their will, men heard a voice which arrested them, heard fiery, penetrating words of condemnation and warning. As with magical power, the dark chambers of their hearts were searched, and their inner thoughts were revealed to them ; portrayals in which they saw themselves were held up before their eyes. They were arrested, fascinated, by a charm of voice and manner ; but much more by convincing words, with which, as with a sword proceeding out of his mouth, the Evangelist cleft atwain their hearts and their thoughts within them. But he who wounded healed. They heard of a Divine love and mercy. It was a new message to them, and was spoken in new tones of tenderness, fervour, and conviction, that melted and humbled and won them.

No voice could speak to the heart of the nation as could the voice of the field-preacher. A hundred devoted parish clergymen, confined within parochial limits, could not have met the necessities of the hour. The sober-minded, decent, respectable people might attend their parish churches ; but the foul and the filthy, the profligate and the idle, would not—did not

—darken the church doors. These were the classes it was most needful to reach. The sick needed the physician; the lost must be saved. All honour to Wesley that these were the people whom he sought; that amongst these his greatest trophies were won. But they could be won only by field-preaching. And while his practical sagacity in devising methods for the care of his converts excites our admiration, the first place must be assigned to his reiterated appeals in fields, or highways, or inn yards; from tombstone or wall-top, or hillside, or market-cross; amid the noisy rabble, or in the quiet vale, wherever a company could be gathered together; and these appeals were not intermitted for fifty long years, save when he was laid aside by sickness or accident. There is nothing equal to it in the history of British Christianity.

But at present he is under restraint, London and Bristol affording ample scope for all the energies of the two brothers. Here, too, Wesley had his only buildings. The Societies in them were under his absolute care; and in them he was developing a model Methodism, even as he was striving in Kingswood, a sort of appanage to Bristol, to establish a model Christian school. This may account for his detention up to the present time at these two centres; and they made incredible demands upon his time, his attention, and his strength. For he did not abate his early morning services, his expounding to his own and other societies, or his sermons to the multitudes that gathered in Moorfields and elsewhere in London, or in the open spaces at Bristol.

True, he made brief excursions to Oxford, and to

a few towns in the neighbourhood of Bristol, as we have seen. He also paid visits to some towns lying in the path of his journeys between London and Bristol; and he made one short Evangelistic tour in South Wales. But beyond these limits he was unable to pass.

We shall presently see him extending his sphere northwards to Newcastle, and on to Inverness; southwards to Land's End; over the Eastern, Western, and Midland Counties; through Wales and Ireland. And year by year, for five decades, does he direct his steps through the rugged roads, in summer's heat and winter's cold, through seed-time and harvest, with one message—the message of mercy to a guilty people; calling to them as with a trumpet-voice; denouncing their sins, like a prophet of old; demanding their repentance; proclaiming to them pardon and peace, and all with undying fidelity and unwearied toil. It is to the record of these decades that the following chapters will be devoted.

But this strange procedure of preaching in the fields did not fail to excite the most strenuous opposition, chiefly from those whose position and profession would have justified them in hailing it as a valuable subsidiary to their own work. Thus Wesley answers these opponents in one of his *Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion*:

“But what need is there,” say some of a milder spirit, “of this preaching in fields and streets? Are there not churches enough to preach in?” No, my friend, there are not; not for us to preach in. You forget; we are not suffered to preach there, else we should prefer them to any places whatever. [This must be borne in mind.] “Well,

there are ministers enough without you." *Ministers enough, and churches enough!* for what? to reclaim all the sinners within the four seas? If there were, they would all be reclaimed: therefore it is evident that there are not churches enough. And one plain reason why, notwithstanding all these churches, they are no nearer being reclaimed, is this—they never come into a church, perhaps not once in a twelvemonth, perhaps not for many years together. Will you say (as I have known some tender-hearted Christians), "Then it is their own fault; let them die, and be damned?" I grant it is their own fault; and so it was my fault and yours when we went astray like sheep that were lost. Yet the Shepherd of souls sought after us, and went after us into the wilderness. And "oughtest not thou to have compassion on thy fellow-servants, as he had pity on thee?" Ought not we also "to seek," as far as in us lies, "and to save that which is lost?"

'Behold the amazing love of God to the outcasts of men! His tender condescension to their folly! They would regard nothing done in the usual way. All this was lost upon them. The ordinary preaching of the Word of God they would not even deign to hear. So the devil made sure of these careless ones; for who should pluck them out of his hand? Then God was moved to jealousy, and went out of the usual way to save the souls He had made. Then, over and above what was ordinarily spoken in His name in all the houses of God in the land, He commanded a voice to cry in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

'Consider coolly, if it was not highly expedient that something of this kind should be. . . . Had the minister of the parish preached like an angel, it had profited them nothing; for they heard him not. But when one came and said, "Yonder is a man preaching on the top of the mountain," they ran in droves to hear what he would say;

and God spoke to their hearts. It is hard to conceive anything else which could have reached them. Had it not been for field-preaching, the uncommonness of which was the very circumstance that recommended it, they must have run on in the error of their way, and perished in their blood.'¹

¹ *Works*, viii. 229.

PART II
THE GREAT WORK

CHAPTER VII

A DECADE OF EVANGELISTIC TOIL

THE MORAL CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY

BEFORE entering more fully upon the record of Wesley's evangelistic career, it is needful briefly to consider the moral and religious state of the country, which called so loudly for the work he was raised up to accomplish. The story of the nation's degeneracy has been so often told, that it tends almost to weariness to repeat it. But it has been well observed that justice to a reformer can never be done until the tendencies against which his effects are directed are well understood. It is not difficult to fix upon definite conditions of the national life of the time, which made reformation an absolute necessity, if the nation was not to suffer from those consequences which take the form of judgment, and which so frequently follow upon gross degenerations of human society. There is a common consensus of testimony that, in the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, England presented the appearance of a deplorable degradation in the national manners, affecting not only one but all sections of society; and showing itself, not merely in a few

details of national life, but in many, the results of a process of decline which had been stealthily advancing.

With almost unvarying voice our best historians of the last century represent the preceding one as having reached the lowest conditions of civilized corruption, and their testimony is supported by innumerable contemporary records. Wesley was himself a credible witness, and his account, written at this time in the first part of his *Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, is fully corroborated by many contemporary and subsequent writers. Many incidents in his history, as we have already seen, and as we shall further see in the course of this narrative, throw into strong relief the ignorance and gross sinfulness of the masses of the people.

It is not possible under the imperative limitations of these pages to enter minutely into the details of the national degeneracy ; but this is the less necessary, as full accounts are to be found in all the histories of the time. A few examples must suffice.

The authorized teachers of religion were many of them deplorably deficient in either good principles or loftiness and purity of character. Within the Church heresy was rife, and moral conviction was lacking, or where not lacking was feeble ; and even amongst the best of her sons the principles of the Reformation were widely departed from. Alas ! the fountains of moral influence were not pure. One of the bishops of the time says : ' I cannot look on without the deepest concern, when I see the imminent ruin hanging over the Church, and, by consequence, over the whole Reformation. The outward state of



JOHN WESLEY PREACHING IN THE FIELDS.

(Ætat 63.)

From the Picture by Hone.

things is black enough, God knows ; but that which heightens my fears rises chiefly from the inward state into which we are unhappily fallen.' He deploras the condition alike of the clergy and the candidates for Holy Orders. 'The case is not much better,' he says, 'in many who, having got into Orders, come for institution, and cannot make it appear that they have read the Scriptures, or any other good book, since they were ordained.'¹

Less surprise will be excited by the above statement when it is remembered that, as Justin McCarthy affirms, in those days, 'Men took Orders with no thought of the sanctity of their calling, of the solemn service it exacted, of its awful duties and inexorable demands. They wished merely to keep famine from the door, to have food and fire and shelter, and they took Orders as under other conditions they would have taken the King's shilling, with no more feelings of reverence for the black cassock than for the scarlet coat.'² With this the testimony of a late bishop painfully coincides:—'All over England, country livings were often filled by hunting, shooting, gambling, drinking, card-playing, swearing, ignorant clergymen, who cared neither for law nor gospel, and utterly neglected their parishes. When they did preach, they either preached to empty benches, or else the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed.'³

An acute observer on the side of orthodoxy noticed that there was at this time little sceptical

¹ Bishop Burnet.

² *History of the Four Georges*, iii. 73.

³ Bishop Ryle.

speculation in England, because there was but little interest in any theological question; and a great sceptic described the nation as settled into the most cool indifference with regard to religious matters that was to be found in any nation in the world. Latitudinarianism had spread widely, but almost silently, through all religious bodies, and dogmatic teaching was almost excluded from the pulpit. In spite of occasional outbursts of popular fanaticism, a religious languor fell over England, as it had fallen over the Continent.¹

William Law describes the country as 'a Christian kingdom of pagan vices, along with a mouth-belief of an Holy Catholic Church and Communion of Saints.' Canon Overton says, 'This description very accurately portrayed the state of England. It was a Christian kingdom, inasmuch as it had not rejected Christianity as an historical faith; on the contrary, I imagine that at few periods has belief, in one sense, been more general than it was at this time, just after the utter collapse of Deism. But it was full of pagan vices. Law hardly drew too dark a picture when he said, "There is not a corruption or depravity of human nature, no kinds of pride, wrath, envy, malice, and self-love, no sorts of hypocrisy and cheating, no wantonness of lust in every kind of debauchery, but are as common all over Christendom as towns and villages."' 'As a proof of this,' he adds, in a note, 'see Rapin, Smollett, Horace Walpole, Secker's Charges, Wesley's Journals, etc., *passim*. In fact, the almost unanimous voice of all contemporary writers echoes the dreary wail.'

¹ Lecky.

Lecky, who has given minute consideration to the national history of the eighteenth century, has portrayed with painful minuteness the condition of the manners of the age, and his dark details are confirmed by many concurrent testimonies.

That the opening years of the century witnessed the greatest inactivity and degradation of the two Universities is made obvious by many writers, and, as the subject has been already referred to, it need not be further considered. But is it any wonder that the moral condition and the intellectual attainments of the bulk of the clergy were so low when the state of college life was so deplorable?

Moreover, in the Presbyterian seminaries Arianism was slowly deepening into Socinianism, and the religious societies which, in the previous century, had promised to exert a widely beneficial influence had unhappily sunk into comparative insignificance.

A latent scepticism and widespread indifference prevailed everywhere amongst the more educated classes. The old religion seemed everywhere loosening its hold upon the minds of men, and it had often no great influence even on its defenders. Butler, in the preface to his *Analogy*, declared that 'it had come to be taken for granted that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious.' He speaks elsewhere of 'the general decay of religion in this nation, which is now observed by every one, and has been for some time the complaint of all serious persons.'¹

The Court, which is always so influential for good

¹ Quoted by Lecky, ii. 530.

or evil upon the conduct and manners of the people generally, was, in the time now under review, in a grievously immoral condition ; its coarse corruption during the reign of the two Georges is matter of common notoriety. And down through the several grades into which human society is necessarily divided the fatal evils of immoral living were prevalent.

Amongst the ruling classes there was a low standard of political honour ; political corruption, indeed, was perhaps the most glaring vice of English society.¹ It is said that only some half a dozen of the members of Parliament attended public worship. The manners and tastes of the country gentry were often to the lowest degree coarse and illiterate ; the bulk of the country squires vegetated on their estates, cut off from communion with the world, without an occupation but that of hunting, or an ambition but that of being the deepest sot of the *quorum*.

If such was the condition of the gentry, no wonder that the lower orders, stimulated by the example of their 'betters,' and unrestrained by either religious principles or moral training, should so far descend as to warrant the period being described as one of social barbarism.

The drama has always exerted a powerful influence in moulding the taste and manners of the people. The profligacy of the stage, during the generation that followed the Restoration, can hardly be exaggerated. The theatres were sources of great corruption, the English stage being far inferior to the French in decorum, modesty, and morality.

The prevailing coarseness of fashionable life and

¹ *Social England*.

sentiment was but little mitigated by the Press. The writings of Swift, Defoe, Fielding, Coventry, and Smollett are sufficient to illustrate the great difference which, in this respect, separated the first half of the eighteenth century from our own day.

One of our recent historians remarks, 'The Church was absolutely out of touch with the great bulk of the people. The poor and the ignorant were left quietly to their own resources. The clergymen were not, indeed, by any means a body of men wanting in personal morality, or even in religious feeling; but they had little or no religious activity, because they had little or no religious zeal. They performed perfunctorily their perfunctory duties, and that, as a rule, was all they did. . . . Atterbury, Burnet, Swift, all manner of writers who were themselves ministering to the Church of England, unite in bearing testimony to the torpid condition into which the Church had fallen. . . . Things were still worse in the Church of Ireland. Hardly a pastor of that Church could spell three words of the language of the Irish people.'¹

Turn where we will in our survey of the nation, we encounter a state of things the most deplorable, and at the same time the most portentous. From the highest estates in the land—the Court, the Parliament, the Church, the schools of learning, the rich landed proprietors—down to the traders and the great populace, all present features which call loudly for the advent of the religious reformer. It is painful

¹ *The History of the Four Georges*. By Justin McCarthy. 4 vols. London. Cassell. Reference may be made to the *History of the Eighteenth Century*, by Walter Besant, and to other histories of this time, in which painful illustrations are given of the low condition into which the morals and habits of English life had sunk.

even to imagine what might have been the issue had not an arrest been put upon this process of moral decay.

Honourable exceptions were to be found among both clergy and laity in the Establishment, and amongst the Dissenters — the faithful ones who mourned over the national debasement, but were powerless to grapple with it. They shone like stars in a dark night ; but what the nation needed was the bright light of a morning's sun. Now, when the darkness was the deepest, that light arose. When the moral condition of the country seemed to be nearing its lowest ebb, and the people to be approaching the utmost limit of degradation, it was then that it pleased Divine Providence to raise up suitable agents, fitted to arrest the downward tendency, and to inaugurate a new era. By a most remarkable process of preparation, as the previous pages will have shown, were the servants of the Divine will made ready for their high calling. Individual endowment, high culture or peculiar gifts, a personal regeneration, a severe religious discipline, habits of self-denial approaching austerity, a fearless intrepidity, indomitable zeal, and fervent enthusiasm, together with an utter unworldliness and the most deeply rooted faith in their mission, in their truth, and in the Divine co-operation—God working with them—were amongst the high qualities which fitted these devoted men to be suitable instruments for the accomplishment of a great moral and spiritual reformation.

Attention is arrested by the wonderful work of reclamation which Wesley and his fellow-labourers began, and to so surprising an extent carried out,

but of which work he must ever be considered the chief leader and the chief actor. And that, not merely because his career was longer than theirs, nor that he was endowed in a higher degree than they with the qualifications needed for the head of a great work ; but mainly because of his gigantic and varied labours, his irrepressible activity, and his unswerving persistence in the use of the most effective measures. He was not only the chief leader of the movement ; he was the soul of it. In doing honour to Wesley, however, it is not needful to hide from view his coadjutors, or to throw their work into the shade. A fragile instrument in the Divine hand, fitted, called, and used by a Divine power, his work was very great. But others also were called and qualified ; and right gladly did he welcome them, one and all, whoever could render the smallest aid. Never was a leader in a great enterprise freer from jealousy of any honour which his co-workers gained. Whitefield, with his spiritualized dramatic power, his self-consuming labour, and his brilliant success ; Charles Wesley, not only the chosen hymnist for them all, but a far mightier preacher than he is generally supposed to have been—perhaps in his earlier course not a whit behind either of the other two ; Fletcher, later on, with his seraphic spirit, his powerful pen, and his fervant labour ; the gradually widening circle of sympathetic clergymen and others who aided him in the work ; and not least the itinerating ‘lay helpers,’ a noble band of men, toiling in heroic service, and often penetrating where the almost ubiquitous chief could not go, ever ready to do his bidding, as he, with a general’s skill, disposed them over the wide field of

conflict ; those of the lay preachers who were not set apart for the work, but who, as they were able, followed their trades and preached their sermons in their own neighbourhood, and hence were called 'local preachers ;' the needful leaders of the 'classes' of believers, among whom were many godly, useful, and honoured women ; the stewards who took charge of all financial affairs ; and many others, each contributing according to his ability to the carrying on of the great campaign—all were welcomed, all were duly recognized and honoured, and even loved, for their work's sake.

But Wesley was the leader. He was acknowledged as such, even at Oxford, immediately on his joining the 'godly club,' and his position was never disputed ; and he was the chief worker. None did so much as he. He travelled more, he preached more, he wrote more than any of them. It is his work that these pages are designed to illustrate. He stands before us as the great champion in this holy campaign, with his unparalleled labours, his great powers of endurance, his unwavering fidelity, and with the conviction deepening and settling in his soul that he was the messenger of God to a benighted people. To this work he devoted his entire strength and time without hasting, and equally without resting. Like many of his co-workers, he endured hardship, fatigue, calumny, and brutal treatment at the hands of fierce mobs. Like a brave captain, he was in the thickest of the fight, never hesitating to take the place of the greatest danger or of the greatest toil. He preached from early morning till the shades of night began to fall ; he pressed on to his preaching stations in all weathers and at all hours, having his plans in his pocket, his books and

papers in his saddle-bags, or on the shelves fitted up in his chaise—his travelling ‘machine.’ His pen was as ready as his tongue, astonishing all who know the extent of his writings ; his letters were innumerable. The originals or copies of upwards of two thousand of these fugitive leaves have been preserved to this day.

Amongst the many qualities that distinguished him, not the least was his indomitable steadfastness of purpose. It will have been observable to the readers of the previous pages how many and how great obstacles presented themselves in his path ; but they were powerless to divert him from it. It is still more observable how many causes for discouragement seemed to be continually arising around him. But it is equally surprising that they had so little effect upon him. He did not abate his labours in the slightest degree on account of them. The relapse of converts, in the very unfavourable circumstances in which they were placed, seemed but to spur him to fresh endeavours to reclaim the errant ones and to defend the faithful. The defection of friends, no more than the open antagonism of his enemies, diverted his steps from his course—no, not for an hour. He was content to stand alone, sustained by the deep and immovable conviction that, as he was called to his work by a Divine authority, so he would be upheld by a Divine support.

It is not in our power to trace his steps through the long years, and to keep pace with him in his rapid passage from town to town and from village to village, along the 250,000 miles that careful estimates give as the extent of his travelling over these isles, in the one great service of calling upon a slumbering

people to awake and arise, that Christ might give them light. So minute a record is impossible, though the materials are to a large extent at hand. To some degree this has been done hitherto, in order to give an idea of the multiplicity and variety of his occupations, and of his ceaseless devotion to the great work he had in hand. Subsequent statements must be more general, noting only the more striking incidents and whatever may specially indicate the development of what Wesley was accustomed to call 'the Work of God,' for how interesting soever the individual incidents may be it would weary us to peruse the account of them. What was it, then, patiently to accomplish them!

This year, with the exception of about a month at Oxford, three weeks in Wales, and one week in the Midlands, Wesley divided his time in almost equal proportions between London and Bristol. Charles Wesley alternated with him, though he preached more at Bristol than in London.

In the closing days of 1740, we saw the first streaks of cloud in the partial defection of Wesley's valuable lay helper at Kingswood—John Cennick. The following year opened amidst alternations of joyous exultation at the manifested power of God, and sorrowful indications of the frailty of man. Assembling all the Bands of both Bristol and Kingswood, Wesley related what God had done for them by him, and what return they had made for several months past by their continual disputes, divisions, and offences, causing him to go heavily all the day long. But other scenes gladdened him. Many were receiving benefit from his labours in preaching and

expounding, so that he writes, in the joy of his heart, 'In the evening our souls were so filled with the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving that I could scarce tell how to expound, till I found where it was written, "My song shall be always of the loving kindness of the Lord. With my mouth will I ever be showing Thy truth, from one generation to another."' "

Returning to London, he met the Society at the Foundery. 'Here,' he says, January 22, 'I began expounding where my brother left off, viz. 1 John iv. He had not preached the morning before [*i.e.* at the five-o'clock service], nor intended to do it any more.'

This points to a defection on Charles Wesley's part that demands a brief consideration. Charles himself evidently alludes to his danger of being drawn aside, and, as it would seem, to his escape, as far back as June 22 of the previous year, when he writes,¹ 'I concluded the day at the men's love-feast [at Bristol]. Peace, unity, and love are here. We did not forget our poor distracted brethren that were, till the Moravians came. How ought I to rejoice at my deliverance out of their hands and spirit! My soul is escaped out of the snare of the fowler. *Abii, erupi, evasi*. And did I not love the lambs of Christ [a Moravian term], indeed, the grievous wolves, I would see your face no more. I am no longer a debtor of the gospel to *you*. Me ye have fairly discharged; but if you reject my testimony, others receive it gladly.' Three days before this he had described to the Society at Oxford, 'The stillness of the first Christians (Acts ii. 42); who continued *in* the Apostles' doctrine, and *in* fellowship,

¹ C. W.'s *Journal*.

and *in* breaking of bread, and *in* prayers.' And in April of that year he wrote the hymn entitled, *The Means of Grace*, which, he says, he 'printed as an antidote to stillness.'¹

In the first three months of this year there is an entire blank in Charles Wesley's Journal; but it is evident that much of this time was spent by him in London, and it is probable that while there he came again under the influence of the Moravians, and particularly of his friends Mr. Hutchins, Mr. Stonehouse, Vicar of Islington, Mr. Chapman, and of his brother-in-law, Mr. Westley Hall, who kept aloof from the Foundery, associated with the Moravians, preached for them, and appeared to be inclined to join with them.²

However, on February 12, Wesley wrote, 'My brother returned from Oxford, and preached on the true way of waiting for God: thereby dispelling at once the fears of some, and the vain hopes of others, who had confidently affirmed that Mr. Charles Wesley was *still* already, and would come to London no more.' But in this Wesley appears to have been too sanguine, for on April 21, soon after Charles had returned to Bristol, Wesley wrote to him from London a letter, in which, after referring to several matters, he gives full and abundant reasons why he could 'in nowise join with the Moravians,' and adds what may further explain his earnest repudiation of them:

'O my brother, my soul is grieved for you: the poison is in you: fair words have stolen away your heart. "No English man or woman is like the Moravians!" So the matter is come to a fair issue.

¹ *Journal*, April 22, 1740.

² *Life of the C. of Hunt.*, i. 41.

Five of us did still stand together a few months since ; but two are gone to the right hand, Hutchins and Cennick ; and two more to the left, Mr. Hall and you. Lord, if it be Thy gospel which I preach, arise and maintain thine own cause ! Adieu !'

This letter is endorsed by Charles, 'When I inclined to the Germans.'

Whether Charles Wesley was at once delivered out of the snare is not apparent ; but on Sunday, July 20, he writes, 'Our hope was much confirmed by those words which I enforced at Kingswood, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord ;" or, as it is afterwards expressed, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." I discoursed in the afternoon on the same subject from Isa. lxiv. 5 : "Thou meetest those that remember Thee in Thy ways," etc. Hence I magnified the law of Christian ordinances, exhorting those who wait for salvation, to be as clay in the hand of the potter, *by* stirring themselves up to lay hold on the Lord. God gave me much freedom to explain that most active, vigorous, restless thing, true stillness.'¹

The entire episode may be closed by the following extract from a letter addressed by the Countess of Huntingdon to John Wesley, which shows alike the danger into which Charles had fallen and his indebtedness to her ladyship for his rescue :

'October 24, 1741.

'Wisdom is justified of her children. Your answer to the former part of mine has quite silenced me on that subject. But I believe your brother's Journal will clear up my meaning more fully to you, for I should labour very

¹ *Journal.*

much to have as few snares in his way as possible. Since you left us, the *still ones* are not without their attacks. I fear much more for him than for myself, as the conquest of the one would be nothing to the other. They have by one of their agents reviled me very much, but I have taken no sort of notice, as if I had never heard it. I comfort myself very much that you will approve a step, with respect to them, your brother and I have taken. No less than his declaring open war with them. He seemed under some difficulty about it at first, till he had free liberty given him to use my name, as the instrument in God's hand that had delivered him from them. I rejoiced much at it, hoping it might be a means of working my deliverance from them. I have desired him to enclose to them yours on Christian Perfection. The doctrine therein contained I hope to live and die by; it is absolutely the most complete thing I know. God hath helped your infirmities; His Spirit was with you of a truth. You cannot guess how I in spirit rejoice over it.

'Your brother is also to give his reasons for quite separating; and I am to have a copy of the letter he sends them to keep by me. I have great faith God will not let him fall; He will surely have mercy on him, and not on him only, for many would fall with him. I feel he would make me stagger through his fall; but I fly from them as far as pole from pole; for I will be sound in my obedience. His natural parts, his judgment, and the improvement he has made, are so far above the very highest of them, that I should imagine nothing but frenzy had seized upon him; but when I consider him, with so many advocates for the flesh about him, having the form of angels of light, my flesh trembleth for fear of him, and I should have no comfort did I not know assuredly, that He that is for him is greater than he that is against him.

'When you receive his Journal, you will rejoice much when you come to Thursday, October 15. . . .'¹

¹ See *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon*, i. 41-2.

Had Charles Wesley been drawn away from his steadfastness to the truth, and from his faithful alliance with his brother, the consequences would have been irreparable. Happily, that calamity was averted, and his service in the great evangelistic enterprise was exceeded only by that of Wesley himself; while by his unparalleled evangelical hymns he renders an ever-enduring ministry to the Church of Christ on the earth.

Fresh outbreaks of popular violence now appeared, as, for instance, at Deptford, 'where many poor wretches were got together, utterly void both of common sense and common decency. They cried aloud as if just come from the tombs. But the word was with power; and many of them were altogether confounded.' Before he could begin to preach on Shrove Tuesday, 'many men of the baser sort, having mixed themselves with the women, behaved so indecently, as occasioned much disturbance. A constable commanded them to keep the peace. For which they knocked him down.' A few days afterwards, while he was preaching in Long Lane, Southwark, 'the host of the aliens gathered together, and one large stone went just over his shoulder.'

All things being settled according to his wish, he left London, February 17. He found a painful state of affairs in Kingswood and the neighbourhood, mainly caused by the attitude assumed by Cennick, who, with fifteen or twenty others, came and told him he 'preached up man's faithfulness, but not the faithfulness of God.' There was trouble also at Bristol, where he inquired, as fully as he could,

concerning the divisions and offences, which, notwithstanding the earnest cautions he had given, began afresh to break out.

He spent an unhappy month in striving to reconcile the now fluctuating Society at Kingswood, but without effect. Cennick declared, 'We are willing to join with you. But we will also meet apart from you. For we meet to confirm one another in those truths which you speak against.' The inevitable division took place; fifty-two sympathizers with Cennick withdrew, whilst upwards of ninety were left. Wesley occupied much of his time in visiting many sick persons, and in regulating the Bristol Society, which had been much injured by these sad disputes.

He then, having arranged matters better than he expected to do, returned at his brother's request to London, where he set apart four hours every day except Saturday for speaking with any who desired it, and an hour every day to examine the 'Bands,' that no disorderly or careless or contentious person might remain amongst them. Sickness being very prevalent, he settled a regular method of visiting, eight or ten persons having offered themselves for the work, 'who,' he says, writing to his brother, 'are likely to have full employment; for more and more are taken ill every day.' This work was very greatly extended afterwards.

On May 1, Wesley writes, 'In the evening I went to a little love-feast which Peter Böhler made for those ten who joined together on this day three years, "to confess our faults one to another." Seven of us were present; one being sick, and two unwilling

to come. Surely the time will return, when there shall be again

“Union of mind, as in us all one soul!”

He is compelled to separate from them; notwithstanding he sighs for union.

On the following day he had a conversation of several hours with Peter Böhler and Spangenberg. The subject of conversation was, ‘a new creature;’ Spangenberg’s account of which was thus given: ‘The moment we are justified, a new creature is put into us. This is otherwise termed, the new man.

‘But, notwithstanding, the old creature, or the old man, remains in us till the day of our death.

‘And in this old man there remains an old heart, corrupt and abominable. For inward corruption remains in the soul as long as the soul remains in the body.

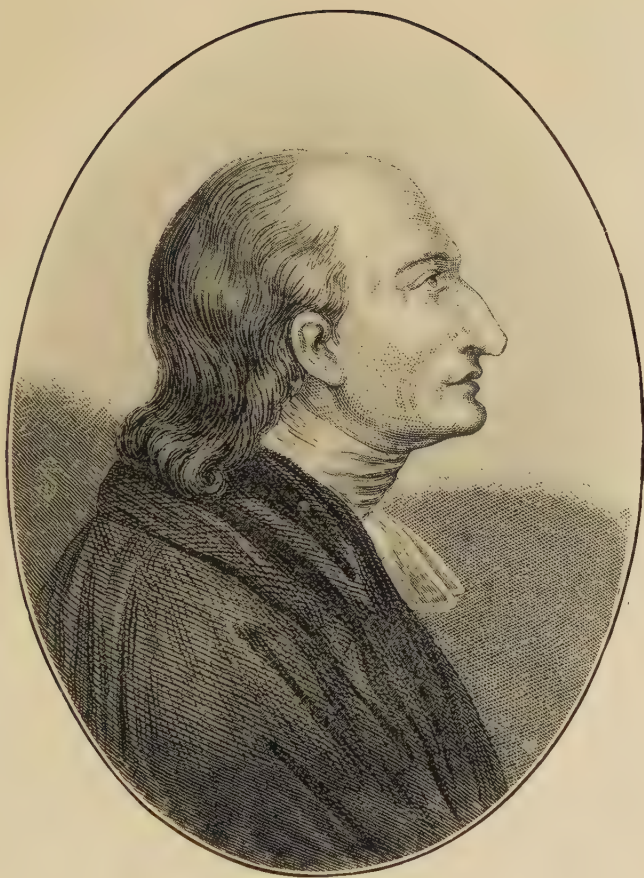
‘But the heart which is in the new man is clean. And the new man is stronger than the old; so that though corruption continually strives, yet while we look to Christ it cannot prevail.’

But Wesley did not believe in the necessary abiding of this corruption till death. He taught his people earnestly to seek its entire destruction. This his friends, the Fetter Lane people, called his doctrine of ‘sinless perfection’—a term which he entirely repudiated. He preached a ‘Christian Perfection,’ justifying the use of the term not only from Scripture, but also from the Collect in the Communion Service, ‘Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name.’ The elevation of the ideal of the Christian

life was one of the great services rendered by Wesley to the Church.

In the following week he records, 'We agreed to meet for prayer and humbling our souls before God, if haply He might show us His will concerning our re-union with our brethren of Fetter Lane. And to this intent all the men and women Bands met at one in the afternoon. Nor did our Lord cast out our prayer, or leave Himself without witness among us. But it was clear to all, even those who were before the most eagerly desirous of it, that the time was not come.'

One of the prominent events of the year 1739 had been the preaching and publication of the sermon on *Free Grace*, to which was appended a hymn of thirty-six stanzas, on *Universal Redemption*, by Charles Wesley. It is a remarkable discourse—one of Wesley's ablest—a thoughtful and vigorous treatment of the subject, clear in statement and conclusive in argument. No effective reply to it has ever been written. Wesley seems to have felt it necessary to make an early and strong pronouncement upon the question. He was alive to the fact that erroneous doctrine was being circulated amongst the Societies, causing division, and seducing some of the members from their steadfastness. Tyerman describes the sermon as in some respects the most important one Wesley ever issued. He says, 'It led to the division which Whitefield [not more than Wesley] deprecates, and also to the organization of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, and to the founding of the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales; and finally culminated in the fierce controversy of 1770, and the publication of Fletcher's



FLETCHER OF MADELEY.

unequalled *Checks to Antinomianism*, which so effectually silenced the Calvinian heresy, that its voice has scarcely been heard from that time to this.' Perhaps this is ascribing too much to the influence of this single sermon. It was the avowal of the doctrine, rather than any particular discussion of it, that led to the results just named. But the sermon marks the beginning of the controversy, the course of which Tyerman has indicated.

During Whitefield's first visit to America, there was no sign of Calvinistic teaching; nor even during the time he spent in England after his return, until immediately before his second embarkation, when in a sermon on Gen. iii. 15, preached at Stoke Newington a fortnight before he set sail, and afterwards published in a volume of sermons, he made three references to 'the elect,' affirming in one of them that, 'The truth is this: God, as a reward of Christ's sufferings, promised to give the elect faith and repentance, in order to bring them to eternal life; and both these, and everything else necessary for their everlasting happiness, are infallibly secured to them in this promise, as Mr. Boston, an excellent Scotch divine, sweetly and clearly shows, in a book entitled, *A Covenant of Grace*;' thus disclosing one source of his views.

Tyerman thinks that Whitefield imbibed these sentiments from the sermons of the Brothers Erskine, with which he had declared himself much pleased and edified, recommending them and Bishop Hall's *Christ Mystical*, and Boehme's *Sermons*, to all.¹ Tyerman is therefore correct in saying that Whitefield's

¹ *Journal*, June 9, 1739.

Calvinism was 'born in England about the month of June, 1739, but was cradled and greatly strengthened in America in 1740.'

Although both Wesley and Whitefield were fervent and resolute in preaching each his own view of the truth, yet they were sincerely desirous that the difference in their opinions should not lead to any diminution of their brotherly regard and affection. Their correspondence during Whitefield's second stay in America amply testifies to this. Some of Whitefield's letters, while affirming his growing belief in the doctrines of electing love, were most tenderly pathetic in their asseverations of affection and regard for his old friends. Wesley, on his part, carefully avoided anything that was likely to disturb their happy fellowship. Whitefield, however, assisted, it is said, by some of the ministers in America, prepared a reply to Wesley's sermon on Free Grace, and published it in Charlestown and Boston. During his voyage home he wrote a letter to his friend Charles Wesley, dated February 1, 1741, in which he says, 'My dear brethren, why did you throw out the bone of contention? Why did you print that sermon against predestination? Why did you, in particular, my dear brother Charles, affix your hymn, and join in putting out your late hymn-book? How can you say you will not dispute with me about election, and yet print such hymns, and your brother send his sermon over, against election, to Mr. Garden and others, in America? Do not you think, my dear brethren, I must be as much concerned for truth, or what I think truth, as you? God is my Judge, I always was, and hope I always shall be, desirous that

you may be preferred before me. But I must preach the Gospel of Christ ; and that I cannot now do without speaking of election.' Referring to his answer, he adds, ' If it occasion a strangeness between us, it shall not be my fault. There is nothing in my answer exciting to it that I know of. O, my dear brethren, my heart almost bleeds within me ! Methinks I could be willing to tarry here on the waters for ever, rather than come to England to oppose you.'

Arriving in London in the month of March, Whitefield submitted his answer to Charles Wesley, who returned it endorsed with the words, ' Put up again thy sword into its place ;' and this led to the postponement of its publication for a time.

Towards the close of the month Wesley writes, ' Having heard much of Mr. Whitefield's unkind behaviour since his return from Georgia, I went to him to hear him speak for himself, that I might know how to judge. I much approved of his plainness of speech. He told me, he and I preached two different Gospels ; and therefore he not only would not join with, or give me the right hand of fellowship, but was resolved publicly to preach against me and my brother, wherever he preached at all. Mr. Hall, who went with me, put him in mind of the promise he had made but a few days before, that, whatever his private opinion was, he would never publicly preach against us. He said that promise was only an effect of human weakness, and he was now of another mind.'¹ Accordingly he did preach against the Wesleys by name both in Moorfields and elsewhere. And even when invited to occupy the pulpit at the

¹ *Life of Charles Wesley*, i. 256.

Foundery, before some thousands of people, and with Charles Wesley sitting at his side, 'he preached the absolute decrees in the most peremptory and offensive manner.'

Whitefield was thus betrayed into a course of action that brought him even more pain than it gave to others. He was the victim at the time of many untoward and conflicting circumstances. His strained relations with the Wesleys had become an underlying, if unacknowledged, source of sorrow to him. His profound love and regard for them did not harmonize with his actions towards them, so that his heart was divided. His pecuniary responsibilities in connection with the Orphan House at Georgia were very great. He was also being severely handled by various critics for his injudicious letters on Archbishop Tillotson's *Whole Duty of Man*. For a time his popularity waned. It is said that the twenty thousand who used to assemble at his preaching services had dwindled down to two or three hundred. He himself tells that, instead of there being thousands to attend him, scarce one of his spiritual children came to see him from morning to night; and that on one occasion, when he was preaching on Kennington Common, scarcely a hundred persons were present to hear him. Wesley's withering exhibitions of election and reprobation were not likely to add to the attractiveness of the teacher of them. But, above all, imprudent sympathizers with his views goaded him on to actions which he would probably never have committed, had he been left to the impulses of his own generous nature. There were not wanting unwise persons who sought to foment a quarrel, as when, in the beginning

of February of this year, a private letter from Whitefield to Wesley having been surreptitiously printed, great numbers of copies were distributed both at the door and in the Foundery itself. Fortunately Wesley procured one, and, after preaching, related the naked fact to the congregation, and told them, 'I will do just what I believe Mr. Whitefield would, were he here himself,' and tore it in pieces before them all, every one who had received it doing the same; so that in two minutes there was not a whole copy left among them. Wesley some time afterwards wrote, 'In March, 1741, Mr. Whitefield, being returned to England, entirely separated from Mr. Wesley and his friends, because he did not hold the decrees. Here was the first breach, which warm men persuaded Mr. Whitefield to make merely for a difference of opinion. Those who believed universal redemption had no desire to separate; but those who held particular redemption would not hear of any accommodation, being determined to have no fellowship with men that were "in such dangerous errors." So there were now two sorts of Methodists: those for particular, and those for general, redemption.'¹

This separation must be looked upon as a peculiarly painful and lamentable occurrence in the early morning of the great Revival. What seemed to be the opening of a bright day was overcast with clouds. But after a short time had elapsed, the old fellowship was restored, and suffered no further interruption to the day of Whitefield's death.

Whitefield speedily recovered his popularity. He preached much in England, and towards the close

¹ *Works*, viii. 349.

of the year had a most hearty reception in Scotland ; and in the following year the remarkable revival at Cambuslang took place. He sailed again for America in August, 1744. Early in 1766 Wesley wrote, ' Mr. Whitefield called upon me. He breathes nothing but peace and love. Bigotry cannot stand before him, but hides its head wherever he comes ; ' and Whitehead, in confirmation of the perfect restoration of affection and friendship, refers to the fact that Whitefield in his last will, written with his own hand, about six months before his death, says, ' I leave a mourning-ring to my honoured and dear friends, and disinterested fellow-labourers, the Rev. Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, in token of my indissoluble union with them, in heart and Christian affection, notwithstanding our difference in judgment about some particular points of doctrine.' And Whitehead further mentions the oft-repeated desire of Whitefield that Wesley should preach his funeral sermon. This melancholy service Wesley performed in the year 1770, both at the chapel in Tottenham Court Road, and at the Tabernacle, Moorfields, and bore most ample testimony to the many excellent qualities, the life-consuming zeal, the almost unparalleled labours, the overpowering eloquence, the wonderful success of his dear friend.

Although at this time Wesley suffered much from pain and weakness, he did not abate his labour. To his spirit, at once charitable and methodical, a fresh outlet for energy now appeared.

Many of the Society lacking food and clothing, and being without employment, while others were sick and ready to perish, and he being unable alone to meet their necessities, he called on the United

Society to bring what clothes they could spare, and to give weekly contributions of a penny or more, as they could afford, for the relief of the poor. He then arranged to employ the needy women in knitting, giving the common price for their work, and adding to it as they required. Over these he appointed twelve inspectors, whose duty embraced the visitation and relief, every other day, of all the sick in their several districts, and the provision of such things as were needful for them. They met together once a week to give an account of their work, and to consult what further could be done.

At the pressing instance of his brother, he repaired on May 18 to Bristol. As he entered the room at the close of his brother's sermon, some wept aloud, some clapped their hands, some shouted, and the rest sang praise, with whom all presently joined.

Here he spent a week, during which he found abundant employment in examining the new members of the Society, visiting the sick—not one of whom he found either fearing or repining—preaching, and adjusting the pecuniary affairs of the Society and of the school at Kingswood. He then set out early to return to London. On the following day he rejoiced with a little society at Windsor, and in the evening preached at the Foundery. Finding his friend Mr. Piers, of Bexley, 'much shaken by the "still" brethren,' he spoke plainly to him; the snare was broken, and he left him rejoicing in hope and praising God for the consolation. Little wonder that many of the simple-minded and ignorant of the people embraced the 'still' delusion, when even clergymen were the victims of it. He exhorted a crowded congregation

not to receive the grace of God in vain, and enforced the same on the Society, which now numbered about nine hundred persons.

The gradual extension of his work now begins by his taking a week's tour into the country, at the earnest persuasion of Lady Huntingdon. During the two days of his outward journey into Leicestershire, he made an experiment which he had been often and earnestly pressed to do, viz. 'speaking to none concerning the things of God, unless his heart was free to it,' with the result that he spoke to none at all for fourscore miles together; that he had *no cross* either to bear or to take up, and commonly in an hour or two fell fast asleep; that he had much respect shown to him as a civil, good-natured gentleman; and he adds, 'O how pleasing is all this to flesh and blood! need ye *compass sea and land*, to make proselytes to this?' He passed through Northampton to Markfield, where there had been a great awakening, but a 'still' preacher had been there, and three parts in four were as fast asleep as ever. He passed on to Ogbrook, where the 'still' teacher was instructing the people, if they would believe, *to be still*; not to pretend to do good (which they could not till they believed); and to leave off what they called the *means of grace*, such as prayer, and running to church and Sacrament. Being offered the use of the church by his friend Mr. Caspar Greaves, Wesley explained the true gospel stillness, and on the following morning preached to a large congregation. He then rode on to Nottingham, where a society had been formed, but he found it withered: the room half full that was formerly crowded within and without; none used any prayer,

nor knelt when prayer was offered ; and the hymn-book [one of those published by the Wesleys, and which had been sent for use in the congregation] and the Bible had vanished, 'supplanted by the Moravian hymns and the Count's sermons!' He expounded, but 'with a heavy heart,' and again the next morning ; and in the evening at Markfield, where the church was quite full. After the early morning service he set out for Melbourne, where, the house being too small for the company, he stood under a large tree and preached ; and again at Hemington, where the people had to stand about the door and windows. Tyerman thinks it was probably in this journey that he formed the acquaintance of the Countess of Huntingdon, who lived in the neighbourhood, at Castle Donington.¹ In this particular he is in error, her ladyship having been for some time well known to the Wesleys, and already a member of the Fetter Lane Methodist Society. The following day being Sunday, he rode into Nottingham, and at eight o'clock preached in the market-place to 'an immense multitude of people,' returning to Markfield in the afternoon, where the crowded church was so hot that he had difficulty in reading the service. Finding 'abundance of people' could not get in, he went out to them and preached ; and again in the evening in the church. On his way to London the next day, he 'read over, in the way, that celebrated book, Martin Luther's *Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians*,' when he declared himself utterly ashamed that he had so esteemed this book merely because he had heard it commended by others, or

¹ *Life of Wesley*, i. 339.

had only read excellent extracts from it. Now he declares that the author 'makes nothing out, clears not up one considerable difficulty, is shallow on many passages, muddy and confused on almost all; that he is deeply tinctured with mysticism throughout, and hence often dangerously wrong.' He apprehends the real spring of the grand error of the Moravians, as then taught, was following Luther for better for worse. Coming to London in the evening of the next day, he preached on Gal. v. 15, and, quoting Luther's comment, openly warned the congregation against the treatise, and publicly withdrew whatever recommendation he had ignorantly given of it. Some portions of Luther's comment had however been very helpful at an earlier period, especially to Charles Wesley, on the subjects of faith and justification.

The next day he rode to Oxford, and found there remained among the poor only two of the twenty-five or thirty weekly communicants. Not one attended the daily prayers of the Church, and the once united company was torn asunder and scattered. Here he remained a week, during which time he consulted Mr. Gambold concerning the subject of his University sermon. Mr. Gambold told him it was of no moment, for, said he, 'all are so prejudiced they will mind nothing you say.' At this time he inquired 'concerning the exercises previous to the degree of Bachelor in Divinity.'¹ Some days after he again met Mr.

¹ The Rev. John Telford gives the following interesting particulars, which explain this remark: 'The Fellows of Lincoln were required to take orders within a year, and to secure their B.D. degree within seven years after they became M.A. Wesley escaped the obligation to proceed as Bachelor of Divinity. John Crosby, treasurer of Lincoln Cathedral in 1476, founded a fellowship, which required its holder to

Gambold, who honestly told him that he was ashamed of his company, and therefore must be excused from going with him to the Society.

Returning to London, he preached in Short's Gardens, and on the following Sunday at Charles' Square, when the rabble brought an ox, which they strove, but vainly, to drive amongst the people; for the beast wheeled round and round, one way and the other, and at length broke through the midst and made clear away. Being in Bristol, he went over to Abingdon, at the earnest request of some that were there; but records, 'so stupid, senseless a people, both in a spiritual and natural sense, I scarce ever saw before. Yet God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.'

On July 25 he preached before the University to a numerous congregation, on *The Almost Christian*, and set out in the afternoon to preach the following day at the Foundery. He is engaged every hour in preaching, visiting the sick, or the members of the Society, and expounding. The latter does not appear to have been a hurried exercise, for, in one case, when the ninth chapter of Romans came in turn, he continued 'an hour longer than usual, and was persuaded

study canon law, and to take a degree in that faculty. After the Reformation, the degree in civil law took its place. When a Fellow found it inconvenient to take his B.D., he was elected to this canonist fellowship, which he held till he had taken his B.D. After Dr. Morley vacated this, in 1703, eight other Fellows had held it from three to five years each. On July 13, 1736, when in Georgia, Wesley was elected to it. He would not give it up, as he did not wish to take his B.D., and held it till 1751. The result was that he was the junior in college standing of all Fellows who took the degree. These facts explain Wesley's inquiry on June 18, about "the exercises previous to the degree of Bachelor in Divinity."—*John Wesley*, p. 47.

that most, if not all, who were present saw that this chapter has no more to do with irrespective predestination than the ninth of Genesis.' He also began a course of addresses on the Book of Common Prayer.

On September 3 he held a prolonged conversation with Zinzendorf, in Latin, which he records in his Journal, appending a letter to the Moravian Church written a short time before. In these he declared, he says, in the plainest manner he could, the real controversy between himself and the Moravians, an unpleasing task, which he had delayed as long as he could with a clear conscience.

At the desire of Mr. Deleznott, a French clergyman, for whom he had already preached, 'after having been long importuned,' Wesley officiated in the Hermitage-street Chapel, Wapping, where he administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to about two hundred members of the Society, as many as the place would well contain. The same number attended on the following Sunday, and so on each Lord's day, until the whole Society, numbering about a thousand, had attended ; those who had the Sacrament at their own parish churches being advised to attend there.

Repairing to Bristol, he met his brother, with Mr. Jones,¹ of Fonmon Castle, who was now convinced

¹ Mr. Jones, of Fonmon Castle, Glamorganshire, was at first very hostile to the truth. One day, when Howel Harris was preaching near his residence, he appeared on horseback riding with some speed, and having a drawn sword in his hand, intending to strike the preacher with it. He was evidently in a great rage. On seeing him, Harris desired the people to make way for him. It happened that a considerable quantity of mud lay unseen in the way, in which the horse stuck so fast that it was impossible for the rider to proceed. Thinking it the more prudent course, he remained until the sermon was concluded. He was so deeply impressed by what he heard that he became a changed man,

of the truth as it is in Jesus. At Kingswood the house was filled from end to end, and they continued ministering the Word of God, and in prayer and praise, until the morning. He paid two brief visits to Wales, preaching wherever he went. On his meeting with Howel Harris, Humphreys, and Seward—all now distinctively of the Calvinistic party—they ‘fell upon their favourite subject.’ Wesley begged for prayer instead of controversy, and Harris gave up some points and strove earnestly to secure peace.

Arriving at Bristol, he found sickness very rife, and was fully engaged in visiting the sufferers. As he was riding to Kingswood, his horse fell, and attempting to rise fell again upon his rider. Wesley was helped into a house, where, ever keeping his one business before him, he found three persons who ‘did run well, but Satan had hindered them.’ Before he left they resolved to set out again. He reached Kingswood in the afternoon, and preached, and returning to Bristol preached again; then spoke at a meeting of the Society, and afterwards attended a love-feast. He writes, ‘I remember nothing like it for many months; a cry was heard from one end of the congregation to the other, not of grief but of overflowing joy and love.’

In the early part of November, Wesley rejoiced much in the comfort that he found both in public and in private. This was, however, soon followed by

and showed much kindness to Harris, and opened a room near the castle for him and his friends to preach in. A close friendship sprang up between him and the Wesleys. He died in the course of the following year, on which event Charles Wesley wrote and published an elegy of 572 lines.

a very severe attack of illness, which continued for a month.

Not being suffered to go to church as yet, he communicated at home. He was advised to remain indoors some time longer, but, not apprehending it necessary, he went to the New Room, and expounded for half an hour. He preached every day during the following week without inconvenience ; then, thinking he might go a little further, he preached on one day both at Kingswood and at Bristol, and afterwards spent an hour with the Society, and about two hours at the love-feast. His body, however, could not keep pace with his mind, and the next day he had another attack of fever ; but it did not last long, and he gradually recovered, and entered again fully upon his labours.

He now felt obliged to exercise discipline upon more than thirty of the little company at Bristol, whom he found to be not adorning the gospel. He returned to London in time to preach on Christmas Eve, and to meet the Society afterwards ; ‘when,’ he says, ‘we scarcely knew how to part, our hearts were so enlarged towards each other.’

On the last day of the year he was again attacked by the fever, but he attended a funeral, as he had promised to do, and ‘could not refrain from exhorting the almost innumerable multitude’ that gathered round the grave. He afterwards preached, and met the Society, when ‘many cried with a loud and bitter cry.’ About ten o’clock he left them and retired to rest.

Many particulars of Wesley’s labours have already been given, but it is impossible to chronicle all.

Every hour, literally every moment, from four o'clock in the morning, was bought up for devotion to his work. If an interval occurred between his public services, his meetings of the Societies, his visitations to the sick, he seized it for writing or for close reading. For the latter even the time spent on horseback was utilized, as we have seen.

On the morning of the new year Wesley awoke in a strong fever, but consented to keep his bed on condition that every one who desired it should have liberty to speak with him. Fifty or sixty people did so. That night he slept well, to the astonishment of all, the apothecary in particular, who said he had never seen such a fever in his life.

Two days after, he met the leaders of the Bands morning and afternoon, and joined with a little company in 'the great sacrifice of thanksgiving.' In the evening, it being the men's love-feast, he desired they would come up; and those whom the room would not contain stood without, while with one mouth they praised God.

On the 4th he 'waked in perfect health,' and preached morning and evening every day during the week. On the Saturday, while he was preaching, 'a rude rout lift up their voice on high.' He 'fell upon them without delay. Some pulled off their hats, and opened their mouths no more; the rest stole out one after another.'

He wrote, 'While I was explaining at Long Lane "He that committeth sin is of the devil," his servants were above measure enraged. They not only made all possible noise (although, as I had desired before, no man stirred from his place, or answered them a

word), but violently thrust many persons to and fro, struck others, and brake down part of the house. At length they began throwing large stones upon the house, which, forcing their way wherever they came, fell down, together with the tiles, among the people, so that they were in danger of their lives. I then told them, "You must not go on thus; I am ordered by the magistrate, who is, in this respect, to us the minister of God, to inform him of those who break the laws of God and the King; and I must do it if you persist herein; otherwise I am a partaker of your sin."¹ When I ceased speaking they were more outrageous than before. Upon this I said, "Let three or four calm men take hold of the foremost, and charge a constable with him, that the law may take its course." They did so, and brought him into the house, cursing and blaspheming in a dreadful manner. I desired five or six to go with him to Justice Copeland, to whom they nakedly related the fact. The Justice bound him over to the next sessions at Guildford. I observed that when the man was brought into the house, many of his companions were loudly calling out, "Richard Smith, Richard Smith," who, as it afterwards appeared, was one of their stoutest champions. But Richard Smith answered not; he was fallen into the hands of One higher than they; as also a woman who was speaking words not fit to be repeated, and throwing whatever came to hand, whom He overtook in the very act. She came into

¹ Sir John Ganson had called upon him a short time previously, and said, 'Sir, you have no need to suffer these riotous mobs to molest you, as they have done long. I and all the other Middlesex Magistrates have orders from above to do you justice, whenever you apply to us.'
—*Works*, xiii. 275.

the house with Richard Smith, fell upon her knees before us all, and strongly exhorted him never to turn back, never to forget the mercy which God had shown to his soul.' A good instance of what Wesley called 'the lion becoming a lamb.' They had no more disturbance at Long Lane; and they withdrew their prosecution on the offender promising better behaviour.

On the following day he preached at Chelsea on the faith which worketh by love. He was very weak, he tells us, when he entered the room; 'but the more "the beasts of the people" increased in madness and rage, the more was I strengthened, both in body and soul; so that I believe few in the house, which was exceeding full, lost one sentence of what I spoke. Indeed, they could not see me, nor one another at a few yards' distance, by reason of the exceeding thick smoke, which was occasioned by the wildfire and things of that kind, continually thrown into the room. But they who could praise God in the midst of the fires were not to be affrighted by a little smoke.'

After the exclusion of some who did not walk according to the gospel, he found that the London Society comprised eleven hundred members.

An interesting subject at this point claims our attention.

From the time Wesley began to preach to his fellow-countrymen, after his return from Georgia, there gradually opened before him the grand idea of spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land, which he presently discerned to be the purpose of Divine Providence in raising up Methodism. This idea gave shape to all his plans and organizations.

If this was not attained, the aim of Methodism was not fulfilled; and all agencies were welcomed only as they promised to aid in this one purpose. Whatever was not contributory to it was beside the mark. The first step towards this end was, of course, the preaching of the gospel, and that to all. But before he could make the experiment of preaching the Word, and leaving it, and those who accepted it, to the contingencies of individual fidelity, he had been trained in the Moravian school to guard and culture the spiritual life of the believer. This was the lesson overlooked by Whitefield; and, although it is impossible adequately to estimate the great benefits of his extraordinary labours, yet it must be acknowledged that it lacked the continuity and discernible permanence which characterized Wesley's work from the beginning.

Wesley had the covert of the Society, and every convert to the truth was encouraged to enter within the protection of its fellowship, and was, after due probation, enrolled as a member. But why enter the Society? Was this the sum of all things? Certainly not. It was a means to an end. We have seen that within the Society were little companies called 'Bands,' each several 'Band' meeting under the care of a senior, sometimes called a 'leader,' for purposes of mutual encouragement and help. Special, even frequent meetings of the Society, apart from the congregations, were held, where the Scriptures were expounded, Christian duties enforced, and unfaithfulness checked. But beyond this, each member of the Society was personally visited, and his individual life watched over and cared for by Wesley himself.

He carried in his pocket, written out by himself, and renewed from time to time, the name and address of every one, even when the Society was numbered by several hundreds. By almost superhuman effort he visited them in their homes, as frequently as his strength and astounding activity enabled him, even when their residences extended 'from Westminster to Wapping'—from one end of London to the other.

This was the earlier condition of things: we now witness the development of the Society, from its imperfect to its complete organization, and the establishment of the Methodist class-meeting.

Setting out from London by way of Chippenham (which he reached with difficulty, the weather being so exceedingly rough and boisterous that he had much ado to keep on his horse), he came to Kingswood, Bath, and Bristol. Here he spent some days with all those who desired to remain in the United Society; and on the 15th of February took a step which was fraught with the utmost importance to the whole framework and the future history of Methodism. The incident in itself was comparatively trifling. Wesley thus relates it: 'I was talking with several of the Society in Bristol concerning the means of paying the debts remaining on the Horsefair Room, when one, a Captain Foy, stood up and said, "Let every member of the Society give a penny a week till all are paid." Another answered, "But many of them are poor, and cannot afford to do it." "Then," said he, "put eleven of the poorest with me; and if they can give anything, well. I will call on them weekly; and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as myself." It was done. In a while

some of these informed me, they found such and such an one did not live as he ought. It struck me immediately, "This is the thing; the very thing we have wanted so long." In it he saw at a glance a means of relief from what was becoming too gigantic a task even for him—his personal visitation of the Society at their own homes. 'I called all the leaders of the classes (so we used to term them and their companies), and desired that each would make a particular inquiry into the behaviour of those whom he saw weekly. They did so. Many disorderly walkers were detected. Some turned from the evil of their ways. Some were put away from us. Many saw it with fear, and rejoiced unto God with reverence. As soon as possible, the same method was used in London and all other places.'¹

He goes on to say, 'It was the business of a leader—(1) To see each person in his class, once a week at the least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor. (2) To meet the minister and stewards of the Society, in order to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that are disorderly and will not be reproved; to pay to the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.

'At first they visited each person at his own house; but this was soon found not so expedient. And that on many accounts—(1) It took up more time than most of the leaders had to spare. (2) Many persons lived with masters, mistresses, or relations, who would

¹ *Works*, viii. 252.

not suffer them to be thus visited. (3) At the houses of those who were not so averse, they often had no opportunity of speaking to them but in company, etc. Upon all these considerations, it was agreed that those of each class should meet all together.' Thus all the ends designed could be secured. 'After an hour or two spent in this labour of love, they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.' The class-meeting thus became a distinguishing characteristic of the Methodist Society, and has continued to be such to the present day.

By the meeting together of the members for prayer and praise and spiritual intercourse, the class was raised from being a mere convenient arrangement for the oversight of individual members, into a means of Christian fellowship and mutual spiritual ministering, in which the scriptural idea of communion is realized in the most practical and serviceable manner; the aim being to help each member to save his own soul, and to aid him in the saving of the souls of his brethren. This has ever since been the nature of the Methodist class-meeting; and to its influence must be traced the compactness and effective organization of the Methodist Church.

Subsequently, with a view to the further consolidation of the Society, 'I determined,' he says, 'at least once in three months to talk with every member myself, and to inquire at their own mouths, as well as of their leaders and neighbours, whether they grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . To each of those whose seriousness and good conversation I found no reason to doubt, I gave a testimony under my own hand, by

writing their name on a ticket prepared for that purpose; every ticket implying as strong a recommendation of the person to whom it was given as if I had wrote at length, "I believe the bearer hereof to be one that fears God and works righteousness." ¹

These tickets were renewed quarterly; and so supplied a quiet and inoffensive method of removing any unworthy member by simply withholding the ticket. When meetings of the Society apart from the congregation were held, the tickets were required to be shown. Wesley found his precedent for the use of these tickets in the *commendatory letters* mentioned in 2 Cor. iii. 1.

In the following year Wesley published *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies in London, Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, dated February 22, 1742-43, and signed by himself alone; all subsequent editions bearing the signatures of both the brothers.

After relating the particulars given above, it is added :

4. There is only one condition previously required in those who desire admission into these Societies; viz. '*a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.*' But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First, By doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised. Such is

The taking the name of God in vain :

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling :

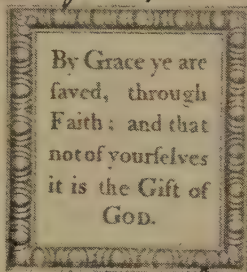
¹ *Works*, viii. 256.

Dec: 1756



Rev: Fisher

July 21

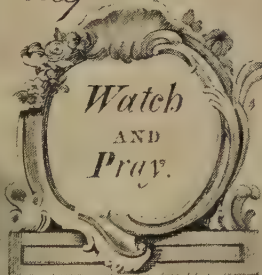


Son! C. A.

NOW is the
DAY of
SALVATION.
SOCIETY.

Son C. A.
Jan. 21

May 1760



John George

Drunkenness ; *buying or selling spirituous liquors*, or *drinking them*, unless in cases of extreme necessity :

Fighting, quarrelling, brawling ; brother *going to law* with brother ; *returning evil for evil*, or *railing for railing* ; the *using many words* in buying or selling :

The *buying or selling uncustomed goods* :

The *giving or taking things on usury* ; *i.e.* unlawful interest :

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation ; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers :

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us :

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God ;
as,—

The *putting on of gold or costly apparel* ;

The *taking such diversions* as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus ;

The *singing those songs or reading those books* which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God :

Softness, and needless self-indulgence :

Laying up treasures upon earth :

Borrowing without a probability of paying ; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

5. It is expected of all who continue in these Societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly, By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power ; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as is possible, to all men :

To their bodies, of the ability that God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison :

To their souls, by instructing, *reproving*, or exhorting all they have any intercourse with ; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine of devils, that ‘we are not to do good, unless *our heart be free to it*.’

By doing good especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be ; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business ; and so much the more, because the world will love its own, and them *only*.

By all possible *diligence* and *frugality*, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race that is set before them, *denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily* ; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ ; to be as the filth and offscouring of the world ; and looking that men should *say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake*.

'6. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these Societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly, By attending upon all the ordinances of God : such are,

The public worship of God ;

The ministry of the word, either read or expounded ;

The Supper of the Lord ;

Family and private prayer ;

Searching the Scriptures ; and

Fasting or abstinence.

'7. These are the General Rules of our Societies : all which we are taught of God to observe, even in His written word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know His Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that soul, as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways : we will bear with him for a season. But then if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

JOHN WESLEY.

CHARLES WESLEY.'

May 1, 1743.

At the end of the month he set out for Wales. At Cardiff he met Mr. Jones of Fonmon; at Wenvo the church was thoroughly filled. In the evening, though in weakness and pain, he preached at Fonmon; the next morning at eight o'clock at Bonvilstone four miles away. At Lantrissant [Llantrisant] the clergyman declared himself willing to allow him the use of the church, but 'the Bishop had forbidden him.' Preaching at Lanissan [Llanishen], he was much refreshed in meeting there 'the little earnest Society.'

While taking part, after his return from Wales, in a 'watch-night' service at Kingswood, his voice was lost in the cries of the people. About a hundred of them walked home together, rejoicing and praising God. A week after, he rode to Pensford, at the earnest request of several residents. But he had no sooner begun to preach than a great company of rabble, hired, as was afterwards found, for that purpose, came furiously upon the company, bringing a bull which they had been baiting, and now strove to drive in among the people. But the beast was wiser than his drivers, and continually ran, either on one side or the other, while the company quietly sang praise to God, and prayed for about an hour. 'The poor wretches,' says Wesley, 'finding themselves disappointed, at length seized upon the bull, now weak and tired, after having been so long torn and beaten both by dogs and men, and by main strength partly dragged and partly thrust him in among the people. When they had forced their way to the little table on which I stood, they strove several times to throw it down, by thrusting the helpless beast against it, who of himself stirred no more than a log of wood. I

once or twice put aside his head with my hand, that the blood might not drop upon my clothes, intending to go on, as soon as the hurry should be a little over. But the table falling down, some of our friends caught me in their arms, and carried me right away on their shoulders, while the rabble wreaked their vengeance on the table, which they tore bit from bit. We went a little way off, where I finished my discourse, without any noise or interruption.'

Returning to London, he preached in the French chapel at Wapping. The next day he met by appointment several 'earnest and sensible men,' to whom he showed the difficulty he had long found of knowing the people who desired to be under his care. After much consideration they all agreed there was no better way to meet the difficulty, and to come to a sure, thorough knowledge of each person, than to copy the Bristol plan, and divide the whole into classes under the inspection of suitable persons in whom he could confide. 'This,' he says, 'was the origin of our classes in London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God; the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest.'

On Friday, April 9, they held the first watch-night in London (similar meetings had previously been held in Kingswood); on which he says, 'We commonly choose, for this solemn service, the Friday night nearest the full moon, either before or after, that those of the congregation who live at a distance may have light to their several homes. The service begins at half an hour past eight, and continues till a little after midnight. We have often found a

peculiar blessing at these seasons. There is generally a deep awe upon the congregation, perhaps in some measure owing to the silence of the night ; particularly in singing the hymn with which we commonly conclude :

‘Hearken to the solemn voice !
The awful midnight cry !
Waiting souls rejoice, rejoice,
And feel the Bridegroom nigh !’

For a long time past the watch-nights have been confined to an annual service held in the last hours of the old year and the first moments of the new—a practice now general in most of the churches. For these services Charles Wesley composed a number of hymns, which were published in a pamphlet entitled, *Hymns for the Watch-night*. But the popular hymn, beginning :

‘Come, let us anew,
Our journey pursue,
Roll round with the year,
And never stand still till the Master appear,’

which for a century and a half has been sung by tens of thousands at the opening of each new year, was not then written. It was published some years afterwards in a pamphlet of *Hymns for the New Year*. There was not a single unusual step taken by Wesley to which objection was not made. But he seldom acted without previous consideration. When the watch-nights were first observed at Kingswood, some advised him to put an end to them. He says, ‘Upon weighing the thing thoroughly, and comparing it with the practice of the ancient Christians, I could see no cause to forbid it. Rather, I believe it might

be of more general use ;' and he joined them at the next meeting. In reply to a clergyman he afterwards wrote, 'You charge me with holding "midnight assemblies." Sir, did you ever see the word *vigil* in your Common Prayer-book? Do you know what it means? If not, permit me to tell you, that it was customary with the ancient Christians to spend whole nights in prayer ; and that these nights were termed *vigiliae*, or *vigils*. Therefore, for spending a part of some nights in this manner, in public and solemn prayer, we have not only the authority of our own Church, but of the universal Church, in the earliest ages.' ¹

He met his old friend Whitefield again, and was persuaded of his sincerity in declaring his earnest desire to join hand in hand with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was on the point of setting out for Bristol, when, receiving an earnest request from the Countess of Huntingdon to hurry to Leicestershire to see a lady, Miss Cowper, who was at Donnington Park lying at the point of death, he repaired thither. On the way he was overtaken by a serious man, who, he says, 'was quite uneasy to know "whether I held the doctrine of the decrees as he did." But I told him over and over, "We had better keep to practical things, lest we should be angry at one another." And so we did for two miles, until he caught me unawares, and dragged me into the dispute before I knew where I was. He then grew warmer and warmer ; told me, "I was rotten at heart, and supposed I was one of John Wesley's followers." I

¹ *Works*, viii. 255 ; ix. 81.

told him, "No ; I am John Wesley himself." Upon which,

*'Improvisum aspris veluti qui sentibus anguem
Pressit ;*

he would gladly have run away outright. But, being the better mounted of the two, I kept close to his side, and endeavoured to show him his heart, until he came into the street of Northampton.' He passed on from Donnington to Birstal, where he received from the well-known John Nelson the account of the strange manner in which he had been led.

Nelson, a Yorkshire mason, while working in London, heard Whitefield preach in Moorfields, and was deeply impressed. The preaching was pleasant to him, Nelson says, and he loved the man ; so that, if any one offered to disturb him, he was ready to fight for him ; but, he adds, 'I did not understand him, though I might hear him twenty times, for aught I know . . . I was like a wandering bird, cast out of the nest, till Mr. John Wesley came to preach his first sermon in Moorfields. Oh, that was a blessed morning to my soul ! As soon as he got upon the stand, he stroked back his hair, and turned his face toward where I stood, and, I thought, fixed his eyes on me ; his countenance struck such an awful dread upon me, before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock.' After his conversion, Nelson returned to his home in Birstal. Here many pressed him with questions concerning the 'new faith.' He acknowledged himself to be a believer, and that he was 'as sure his sins were forgiven as he could be of the

shining of the sun.' This being noised abroad, more and more came to inquire. Unawares he began to quote, explain, and enforce portions of Scripture. This he did at first in his house, but, the company greatly increasing, he was compelled, on returning from his day's work, to stand at his door and speak to the people. Many accepted his word, and a society was established in Birstal. Here Wesley preached 'to several hundreds of plain people, and spent the afternoon in talking severally with those who had tasted of the Word of God.' From Birstal he went to Newcastle, reading on the way Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, and, as was his wont, recording his judgment upon it.

Wesley was now entering upon the extension of his work beyond the spheres to which hitherto he had been confined. In going to Birstal and Newcastle, which were entirely new scenes of labour to him, he believed that he was following the leading of Divine Providence, for indications of which he watched and patiently waited, and was ever ready to respond to them when they were made known. These two places stand out prominently in all Wesley's future operations, and in all the subsequent chronicles of the revival. For students of the history of Methodism they have a kind of classical interest.

He reached Newcastle in the evening of Friday, May 28. After a short refreshment he walked into the town, of which he writes :

'I was surprised : so much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing (even from the mouths of little children), do I never remember to have seen and heard before in so small a compass of time. Surely this place is ripe for Him who

“came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” . . . At seven o'clock on Sunday morning I walked down to Sandgate, the poorest and most contemptible part of the town; and, standing at the end of the street with John Taylor, began to sing the hundredth psalm. Three or four people came out to see what was the matter; who soon increased to four or five hundred. I suppose there might be twelve or fifteen hundred before I had done preaching; to whom I applied those solemn words, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed.”

‘Observing the people, when I had done, to stand gaping and staring upon me, with the most profound astonishment, I told them, “If you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God’s help, I design to preach here again.”’

‘At five, the hill on which I designed to preach was covered, from the top to the bottom. I never saw so large a number of people together, either in Moorfields, or at Kennington Common. I knew it was not possible for the one half to hear, although my voice was then strong and clear; and I stood so as to have them all in view, as they were ranged on the side of the hill. The word of God which I set before them was, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.” After preaching, the poor people were ready to tread me underfoot, out of pure love and kindness. It was some time before I could possibly get out of the press. I then went back another way than I came; but several were got to our inn before me; by whom I was vehemently importuned to stay with them, at least, a few days; or, however, one day more. But I could not consent; having given my word to be at Birstal, with God’s leave, on Tuesday night.’

Leaving Newcastle, he rode to Boroughbridge; and thence to Birstal, where a multitude of people had

gathered. He began to speak to them about seven o'clock, and could not conclude till half-past nine.

He also preached near Halifax, and near Dewsbury Moor, twice; at Mirfield; at Adwalton, in a broad part of the highway; again at Birstal, where 'all the hearers were deeply attentive;' at Beeston, where he read Jacob Behmen's *Mysterium Magnum*, and pronounced it to be 'most sublime nonsense; inimitable bombast; fustian not to be paralleled.' Riding for Epworth, he finished Madame Guyon's *Short Method of Prayer* and *Les Torrents Spirituels*, in which he found that the *still* brethren 'only retailed from this poor quietist.'

Returning thus to Epworth, after an interval of some years, he was soon discovered by two or three poor women; one of them was an old servant of his father's. He inquired if they knew any in Epworth who were in earnest to be saved. 'I am, by the grace of God,' said one of them, 'and I know I am saved through faith; and many here can say the same thing.' The next day being Sunday, his companion, John Taylor, after the service, stood in the churchyard and gave notice, 'Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock.' At which time Wesley stood on his father's tombstone and preached to such a congregation as he believed Epworth never saw before. Being earnestly pressed by many, not only of Epworth but of several adjoining villages, and finding the *still* brethren had been here also, he remained for some days, preaching and speaking severally with those, in every place, who had found or waited for salvation; each evening taking his stand on his father's tomb. We learn

that a whole waggon-load of these new heretics had been brought by their angry neighbours before a justice of the peace, Mr. George Stovin, of Crowle, a town near by, who inquired what they had done ; at which there was a deep silence. At length one said, 'Why, they pretend to be better than other people ; and besides, they pray from morning to night.' 'But have they done nothing besides ?' 'Yes, sir,' said an old man ; 'an't please your worship, they have *convarted* my wife. Till she went among them, she had such a tongue ! And now she is as quiet as a lamb.' 'Carry them back, carry them back,' replied the justice, 'and let them convert all the scolds of the town.'

At Epworth striking effects accompanied the preaching. One evening on every side, as with one accord, the people lifted up their voices and wept ; the following evening several dropped down as dead, and amongst the rest was such a cry as almost drowned the voice of the preacher. But their mourning was turned into joy and their cries into songs of praise.

A gentleman was present at one service who pretended not to be of any religion at all, and who had not attended worship of any kind for thirty years. Wesley, observing him to be standing motionless as a statue, said, 'Sir, are you a sinner ?' He replied in a deep and broken voice, 'Sinner enough ;' and continued staring upwards till his wife and a servant or two, who were all in tears, put him into his chaise and carried him home. Calling upon him some years after, Wesley was agreeably surprised to find him strong in faith, though weak in body,

and able to bear testimony that for a long time he had been rejoicing in God, without either doubt or fear; and was now waiting for the welcome hour, when he should depart and be with Christ.¹

On Sunday, Wesley preached at Haxey at seven; morning and afternoon at Wroot, where the church, which had been offered to him, could not contain the people; at six he preached in Epworth churchyard, 'to a vast multitude,' when, he says, 'I continued with them for near three hours; and yet we scarce knew how to part'—and this was the fourth service in the day! He makes the following reflection: 'O let none think his labour of love is lost because the fruit does not immediately appear. Near forty years did my father labour here; but he saw little fruit of all his labour. I took some pains among this people too; and my strength seemed to be spent in vain. But now the fruit appeared. There were scarce any in the town on whom either my father or I had taken any pains formerly, but the seed sown so long since now sprang up, bringing forth repentance and remission of sins.'

On the following day he set out for Sheffield, to seek one David Taylor,² 'whom God had made an instrument of good to many souls.' Not finding him, he was minded to go forward, but the people

¹ *Journal*, June 12, 1742, April 17, 1752.

² Taylor was a *protégé* of the Countess of Huntingdon and a convert of the Methodists. Having received a tolerable education, and being much concerned for the spiritual welfare of his neighbours, he began to speak to them of their lost estate; and his word was with power. Encouraged by the Countess, he spoke in the villages near Leicester, and afterwards in various parts of Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire. He was one of several who prepared the way for Wesley; he was drawn aside by the *still* brethren.

constrained him to stay and preach both morning and evening. Taylor arriving, Wesley learned from him, and recorded, for his own future guidance, that he (Taylor) had occasionally exhorted multitudes of people in various parts; but after that, he had taken no thought about them, so that the greater part were fallen asleep again. A confirming testimony to the prudence of that defensive care which Wesley was striving to exert over his converts.

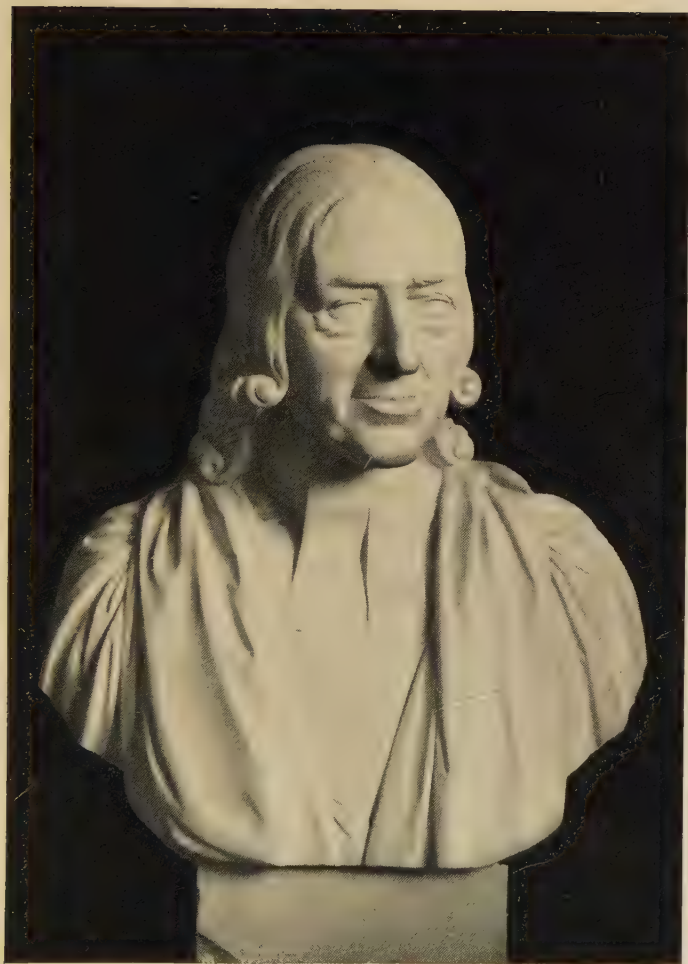
Passing on from Sheffield, he preached at Barley Hall, subsequently the scene of many hallowed services, where many were melted down and filled with love to their Saviour. The next morning he began preaching about five, but was compelled to break off in the middle of his discourse; for, he says, 'their hearts were so filled with a sense of the love of God, and our mouths with prayer and thanksgiving.' After a time he resumed his sermon.

Leaving Sheffield, he passed on to Ripley, Donnington Park, Ogbrook, Melbourne, Markfield, Coventry, and Evesham; preaching wherever he came, and gathering together the little Society in every place where one had been established: which, at least, meant almost every town through which he had previously passed. In each Society he corrected such errors or evils as had troubled them. He passed on to Stroud, preaching in the market-place at noon, where 'there would probably have been more disturbance, but that a drunken man began too soon, and was so senselessly impertinent that even his comrades were quite ashamed of him.' In the evening he preached on Minchin-Hampton Common, where were 'many of Mr. Whitefield's Society.'

On the following day, Sunday, June 27, he preached at Painswick at seven ; at ten attended the church ; in the afternoon at Runwick, at the close of the afternoon service, he addressed 'a vast multitude of people ;' and concluded the day by another service on Minchin-Hampton Common. The next day he rode to Bristol, where he found disputing had done much mischief. As he was coming out of Newgate, one poured out such a flood of cursing and bitterness as he 'scarce thought was to be found out of hell.' So the spirit of evil, whose territory was being assailed, found expression through its agents. He was occupied for fully four days in composing the little differences which had arisen amongst his Bristol people.

Riding to Cardiff, he found much peace and love in the little Society there. On the following day (July 7) he returned, preaching to a small attentive congregation near Henbury, and before eight reaching Bristol, where he had 'a comfortable meeting with many who knew in whom they believed.' 'Now, at length,' he says, 'I spent a week in peace, all disputes being laid aside.' He returned to London on July 20.

Thus ended Wesley's first extended evangelistic tour, in which it may be noticed that he always awaits the indications of circumstances—he would, perhaps more correctly, say the indications of Providence—before proceeding to preach and establish societies in fresh places. It will also be observed that little sporadic societies sprang up in different parts of the country from various causes, without his direct intervention. It may further be noticed that



Photo]

[Walker & Boutall.

BUST OF JOHN WESLEY.

From the National Portrait Gallery.

he begins to travel in company, if possible, and it soon became the practice for one or other of his helpers to join him in his excursions.

Various circumstances prepared the way for Wesley's visits. In Wales, for example, Howel Harris, a preacher of great power, of whom it was said, 'He tears all before him like a large harrow,' had laboured since 1735, and had organized thirty societies, called 'Private Experience Societies,'¹ before either Whitefield or Wesley visited the Principality.

On his return to London, Wesley found his mother 'on the borders of eternity; but she had no doubt or fear, nor any desire but (as soon as God should call) to depart and be with Christ.' Three days afterwards she passed away. He thus describes the scene, and the burial: 'Friday, July 23.—About three in the afternoon I went to my mother, and found her change was near. I sat down on the bedside. She was in her last conflict; unable to speak, but I believe quite sensible. Her look was calm and serene, and her eyes fixed upward, while we commended her soul to God. From three to four the silver cord was loosing, and the wheel breaking at the cistern; and then, without any struggle, or sigh, or groan, the soul was set at liberty. We stood round the bed, and fulfilled her last request, uttered a little before she lost her speech: "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God."' On the following Sunday, he says, 'Almost an innumerable company of people being gathered together, about five in the afternoon, I committed to the earth the body of my mother, to sleep with her fathers. It was one of the

¹ *Life and Times of Howel Harris, Esq.*, 72, 74.

most solemn assemblies I ever saw, or expect to see on this side eternity.' Thus closed the chequered earthly life of this saintly woman, who had gained for herself an almost peerless position among the wives and mothers of England.

'August 8, I cried aloud in Radcliff Square, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Only one poor man was exceeding noisy and turbulent. But in a moment God touched his heart. He hung down his head; tears covered his face; and his voice was heard no more. I was constrained this evening to separate from the believers, some who did not show their faith by their works. One of these was deeply displeased, spoke many very bitter words, and went abruptly away. In a day or two afterwards he sent a note, demanding the payment of one hundred pounds, which he had lent about a year before, to pay the workmen at the Foundery. Two days afterwards he came and said he wanted his money, and could stay no longer. I told him I would endeavour to borrow it; and desired him to call in the evening. But he said he could not stay so long, and must have it at twelve o'clock. Where to get it, I knew not.' Wesley adds, 'Between nine and ten, one came and offered me the use of an hundred pounds for a year; but two others had been with me before, to make the same offer. I accepted the banknote which one of them brought; and saw that God is over all.'

On the way to Bristol he read over 'that surprising book, *The Life of Ignatius Loyola*, surely one of the greatest men that ever was engaged in the support of so bad a cause! I wonder any man should judge him to be an enthusiast. No, but he

knew the people with whom he had to do. And setting out (like Count Z——) with a full persuasion that he might use guile to promote the glory of God or (which he thought the same thing) the interest of His Church, he acted in all things consistently with his principles.'

At Oxford he met his brother and Mr. Charles Caspar Graves. Mr. Graves, formerly a student of Magdalen College, Oxford, was converted under Charles Wesley's ministry, and became one of the Oxford Methodists after the Wesleys had left. His friends, believing him to be 'stark mad,' removed him from his college. Almost coerced by them into compliance, he addressed a document to the fellows of his college, renouncing the principles and practices of the Methodists, declaring his sorrow that he had given offence and scandal by attending their meetings, and promising to offend no more. Two years afterwards, under a deep conviction of his error, he wrote again, confessing that he had acted under the influence of a sinful fear of man, and in deference to the judgment of those whom he held to be wiser than himself; and he now openly retracted his former assertion, and declared that he knew no principles of the Methodists (so-called) which were contrary to the Word of God, nor any practices but what were agreeable both to Scripture and the laws of the Church. He became a very useful clergyman, and a friend and fellow-labourer of the Wesleys.

Having 'regulated' the Society here and at Kingswood, he returned to London, reading on the way 'that excellent tract, Mr. Middleton's *Essay on Church Government*,' and 'once more the Life of that

good and wise (though mistaken) man, Gregory Lopez.'

Being pressed to visit a poor murderer in Newgate, he objected that the turnkeys, as well as the keeper, hated the Methodists, and had refused to admit him even to one who earnestly begged it the morning he was to die. However, he went, and to his surprise found all the doors open to him. While he was exhorting the sick malefactor to call upon God, the rest of the felons flocked round, to whom he spoke 'strong words concerning the Friend of Sinners, which they received with as great signs of amazement as if it had been a voice from heaven.' When he came into the common hall, one of the prisoners, asking him a question, gave him occasion to speak among them, more and more still running together, while he declared God was not willing any of them should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Going by desire, on Sunday, September 12, to preach in an open place commonly called the Great Gardens, lying between Whitechapel and Coverlet-Fields, he found a vast multitude gathered, and called upon them to repent and believe the Gospel. 'Many of the beasts of the people,' he writes, 'laboured to disturb those of a better mind. They endeavoured to drive in a herd of cows among them; but the brutes were wiser than their masters. They then threw whole showers of stones, one of which struck me just between the eyes. But I felt no pain at all, and when I had wiped away the blood, went on testifying with a loud voice that God hath given to them that believe, not the spirit of fear, but of power and love, and of a sound mind. And by the spirit

which now appeared through the whole congregation, I plainly saw what a blessing it is, when it is given us, even in the least degree, to suffer for His name's sake.' He carried the scar on his forehead to the end of life.

On the day following the incident just related, he set out after the early service, preached at nine at Windsor, and the next evening came to Bristol, where he spent a fortnight in examining the Society, and in speaking severally to each member. The next two months were spent alternately at London and Bristol, where he daily pursued his evangelistic work and watched over his societies.

On Monday, November 8, at four, he set out from London for Newcastle, and preaching at various towns on the way, he arrived on Saturday, and at once met the wild, staring, loving Society. His brother had been labouring here for some weeks, but had just returned to London.

On Sunday he began preaching at five o'clock ('a thing never heard of before in these parts'), when 'the victorious sweetness of the grace of God was present with His word.' At ten he went to All Saints, where was such a number of communicants as he had scarce seen but in London or Bristol. At four he preached in the square of the Keelmen's Hospital, and met the Society at six. On Monday morning he began, at five, expounding the Acts of the Apostles.

Each afternoon he spoke severally with the members of the Society. On Tuesday evenings he expounded the Epistle to the Romans, and after the sermon met the Society.

Struck by the different manner in which God is pleased to work in different places, he says, 'The grace of God flows here with a wider stream than it did at first either in Bristol or Kingswood ; but it does not sink so deep. Few are thoroughly convinced of sin, and scarce any can witness that the Lamb of God has taken away their sins.' He adds, 'I never saw a work of God in any other place so evenly and gradually carried on. It continually rises, step by step. Not so much seems to be done at any one time as hath frequently been at Bristol and London, but something at every time. It is the same with particular souls. I saw none in that triumph of faith, which has been so common in other places. But the believers go on calm and steady. Let God do as seemeth Him good.' He began to visit the surrounding places. On Sunday, 28th, after preaching in the room at five, and in the hospital at eight, he walked about seven miles to Tanfield Leigh, where a large congregation was gathered from all the country round about, but 'so dead, senseless, unaffected a congregation' he had scarce seen. His experience here, as at many other places, led him to determine not to strike one stroke in any place where he could not follow the blow.

In Newcastle he secured a piece of ground on which to build a room for the Society, and removed into a lodging adjoining. The extreme cold prevented the building from being at once begun, but on Monday, December 20, the first stone of the new house was laid. This was afterwards known as the Orphan House, it being used, amongst other purposes, as a school for orphans. The building

was computed to cost £700, towards which Wesley had twenty-six shillings in hand. Many were positive it would never be finished, or that he would not live to see it covered. But he was of another mind, nothing doubting that, as it was begun for God's sake, He would provide what was needful for the finishing. Tyerman says: 'It was hallowed by associations far too sacred to be easily forgotten. Here one of the first Sunday Schools in the kingdom was established, and had not fewer than a thousand children in attendance. Here a Bible society existed before the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed. Here was one of the best choirs in England; and here, among the singers, were the sons of Mr. Scott, afterwards the celebrated Lords Eldon and Stowell. Here was the resting-place of John Wesley's first itinerants; and here colliers and keelmen, from all parts of the surrounding country, would assemble, and after the evening service, would throw themselves upon the benches, and sleep the few remaining hours till Wesley preached at five next morning.¹ It became the northern home of Wesley and his helpers, and the centre of northern Methodism for many years.'²

While he was preaching on the site in the evening, he had frequently to stop, while the people prayed and gave thanks to God.

At Horseley, the house being too small, he preached in the open air, though a furious storm began. 'The wind,' he says, 'drove upon us like

¹ *Life of Wesley*, i. 393.

² See *The Orphan House of Wesley*. By Rev. W. W. Stamp. London. 1863. 8vo.

a torrent, coming by turns from east, west, north, and south. The straw and thatch flew round our heads, so that one would have imagined it could not be long before the house must follow; but scarce any one stirred, much less went away, until I dismissed them with the peace of God.' The next day he preached at Swalwell, when again the wind was high and extremely sharp, but none went away. The following day, after preaching as usual in the Square, he took horse for Tanfield, being more than once nearly blown off his horse. At three he preached to a multitude of people, and afterwards met the Society in a large upper room, which rocked to and fro with the violence of the storm.

As he took his farewell before the largest company he had seen in Newcastle, they hung upon him, so that he could with difficulty disengage himself; as it was, 'a muckle woman' kept her hold, and ran by the horse's side to the Sandgate. He and his companion, Jonathan Reeves, reached Darlington that night, and Boroughbridge the last day of the year, and spent the first day of the new year at Epworth.

'In this year,' Wesley writes, 'many societies were formed in Somersetshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and Nottinghamshire, as well as the southern parts of Yorkshire. And those in London, Bristol, and Kingswood were much increased.'¹ And every society became a centre of religious light and Christian activity and influence, and prepared the way for the extension of the evangelist's visits.

Wesley commenced the year at Epworth, where

¹ Wesley's *Ecclesiastical History*, iv. 180.

he preached at five o'clock, and on his father's tomb at eight; but he was denied the Sacrament by the curate. 'Pray tell Mr. Wesley,' said he, 'I shall not give *him* the Sacrament; for he is not fit.' At Birstal he found many had been turned aside by 'the Germans.' He arrived in Sheffield wet and weary, then pressed on to the poor colliers at Wednesbury, where his brother had preceded him. He preached in the Town Hall morning and evening, and in the open air. Many were deeply affected, and about a hundred desired to join together. In two or three months they were increased to between three and four hundred. Passing through Evesham, he came to Stratford-on-Avon, where 'most of the hearers stood like posts; but some mocked, others blasphemed, and a few believed.' The remainder of the month was spent in and near Bristol. Returning to London, he and his brother visited the whole of the Society, which occupied them for some days, from six in the morning till six in the evening.

About the middle of February he set out for Newcastle, where he found that the good impressions made on the minds of some of the people were not deep, and that it was necessary to put away more than sixty of them for various gross offences. He was led to conclude, from the unhappy instances that he had met with in all parts of England, that it was a great evil for people to be half-awakened, and then left to themselves, to fall asleep again; and he resolved not to attempt to deepen an impression which had no evidence of being permanent.

He preached in the shell of the new preaching-house, then in course of erection; when a great

multitude gathered, most of whom kept watch far into the night.

He visited Placey, a small colliery village about ten miles north of Newcastle, the inhabitants of which had always been in the first rank for savage ignorance and wickedness of every kind. He tells us that he felt great compassion for these poor creatures, from the time he first heard of them, and the more because all men seemed to despair of them. He set out with a guide, an unusually high north wind driving the sleet in their faces, which froze as it fell, so that they could barely stand when they arrived. He stood and declared Him who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The poor sinners, he says, quickly gathered together, and gave earnest heed to the things which were spoken; as they did again in the afternoon, in spite of the wind and snow. He visited them again and again, and had occasion greatly to rejoice over his labours.

Returning from Newcastle through Knaresborough, Leeds, Birstal, and Sheffield, he came to Wednesbury, where he found comparative quiet. On the Sunday afternoon he attended service in the church, and 'never heard so wicked a sermon, and delivered with such bitterness of voice and manner.' Knowing what ill effects would be produced by it, he endeavoured to fortify the minds of the people. While he was speaking, a neighbouring clergyman in a very drunken state rode up and, after many 'unseemly and bitter words, laboured much to ride over the people.' All this bore its fruit in a short time, as we shall see.

After a week's rest and peace at Bristol, being

refreshed in mind and body, he made a tour through part of Wales ; and all went well except at Cowbridge, where a mob, 'headed by one or two wretches called gentlemen, continued shouting, cursing, blaspheming, and throwing showers of stones almost without intermission.' So, after some time spent in prayer for them, he dismissed the congregation. He returned to Bristol, and after a fortnight's work there repaired to London.

On Trinity Sunday he began services in a chapel in West Street,¹ Seven Dials, built some sixty years before by the French Protestants. This was for years afterwards the scene of many remarkable Methodist services. It was the custom of the Wesleys, when in London, to administer the Lord's Supper every Sunday. The first service in West Street was a sacramental service, which lasted no less than five hours, so great was the concourse of communicants. Wesley was afraid his strength would not hold out for his other work ; but says, 'God looked to that ; so I must think, and they that will call it enthusiasm, may.' In the evening he preached at the Great Gardens to an 'immense congregation ;' then met the leaders of the classes, and after them the Bands. 'At ten at night,' he says, 'I was less weary than at six in the morning.' The following Sunday the service lasted six hours, so he divided the communicants into three companies that there might not be more than 600 at one time. He was gladdened to find that few out of the 1950

¹ It was here that Mrs. Rich, the wife of the lessee of Covent Garden Theatre, herself an actress, heard Charles Wesley preach, was converted, and at once renounced the stage. She became a faithful Methodist, and for many years was a great friend of the Wesleys.

members, to which the Society had grown, had lapsed from their steadfastness.

Charles had been itinerating northwards, and his labours and successes had kept pace with his brother's. In Wednesbury a society of above three hundred members had been formed. Here a piece of ground having been given on which to build a preaching-house, he 'consecrated it by an hymn'; and then walked with many of the brethren to Walsall singing. He was received with noisy greetings by the rough people. Standing on the steps of the market-house, he opened his Bible to preach. He says, 'An host of men was laid against us. The street was full of fierce Ephesian beasts (the principal man setting them on), who roared and shouted and threw stones incessantly. Many struck without hurting me. I besought them in calm love to be reconciled to God in Christ. While I was departing, a stream of ruffians was suffered to bear me from the steps. I rose, and having given the blessing, was beat down again. So the third time, when we had returned thanks to the God of our salvation. I then from the steps bade them depart in peace, and walked quietly back through the thickest rioters. They reviled us, but had no commission to touch a hair of our heads.' After endeavouring to confirm the faith of the converts, he left for the north, there to meet with yet more violent treatment.

Wesley was not surprised at the news from Staffordshire; 'nor should I have wondered,' said he, 'if after the advices they had so often heard from the pulpit, as well as from the episcopal chair, the zealous, high-minded Churchmen had risen and cut all the

Methodists in pieces.' Consulting a legal authority, he was assured he might have an easy remedy, if he resolutely prosecuted 'those rebels against God and the King.'

He then started for the north. At Newcastle he found that, though some had fallen away, about six hundred continued faithful together for the hope of the gospel. Having been moved, ever since his first visit to Newcastle, at the crowds who every Sunday sauntered to and fro on the Sandhills, he resolved to find them a better employ, and walked straight from the church thither, and gave out a verse of a psalm. 'In a few minutes,' he says, 'I had company enough, thousands upon thousands crowding together.' He had proof that the very mob of Newcastle in the height of their rudeness had some humanity left, for though they made so great a noise that his voice could scarcely be heard, yet they did not throw anything, nor did he receive any personal harm. He had a similar congregation in the High Street at Sunderland. At Lower Spen, one of his people, John Brown, by his rough and strong, though artless words, had left deep convictions in the hearts of his neighbours, so that they were prepared for the message, 'He that believeth hath everlasting life.'

Out of his favourite congregation at Placey, he 'joined together a little company who desired repentance and remission of sins.' In these simple words is explained his usual method of proceeding with those who were deeply impressed under his preaching, by which means the country became gradually covered with a network of societies, and in them the ignorant and feeble were gathered as lambs in a fold,

and were watched, and tested, and trained in truth and godliness.

Returning with John Downes, of Horsley, who for thirty years afterwards rendered service as a preacher, and left his name indelibly marked on the pages of early Methodism, he came to Darlington.

He spent a few days in the neighbourhood of Birstal, preaching at as many of the little towns as he could, and returned slowly to London, so ending a tour of two months, full of interest and adventure.

A chapel at Snowsfields, on the Surrey side of the river, built by a Socinian lady, having been offered him, he announced his design to preach there, when a zealous woman warmly replied, 'Will Mr. Wesley preach at Snowsfields? Surely he will not do it? Why, there is not such another place in all the town. The people there are not men, but devils.' But Snowsfields became a valuable Methodist centre.

Three weeks after, he started for Bristol. He 'rode softly' to Snow Hill, when, the saddle slipping, he fell over the horse's head. Some boys helped him, but cursed and swore all the time. He spoke plainly to them, and they promised to amend. Two or three men helping him to mount swore at almost every word. He says, 'I turned to one and another, and spoke in love. They all took it well, and thanked me much.' The horse cast a shoe, which gave him the chance of talking closely with the smith and his servant. He says he mentions these little circumstances to show how easy it is to redeem every fragment of time, when we feel any love to those souls for whom Christ died. It was in this way that

the evangelist pursued his work, ever on the alert to seize an opportunity for striving to redeem men from evil, either singly or in crowds.

He now designed to extend the area of his labours to Cornwall, which his brother and one or two of the lay preachers had already visited, and where, in the future, he was to reap a most abundant harvest. Setting out from Bristol, he made no considerable stop until he reached St. Ives, which became for a time the centre of Cornish Methodism, and where was a Society of about a hundred and twenty persons, who had been gathered together on Dr. Woodward's plan, and with whom the Methodists had had intercourse through a Captain Turner of Bristol, who some time before had put in his vessel there. Wesley spent three weeks, here and in other towns, preaching at every available opportunity. He also paid a visit to St. Mary's, one of the Scilly Isles. His congregations varied from a handful of people to ten thousand who gathered at Gwennap on his second visit. The disposition of the people was peculiar, some seeming 'pleased and unconcerned,' on others a little impression was made, the rest showing 'huge approbation and absolute unconcern'; in one place he observed 'an earnest stupid attention,' while at another he found 'much goodwill, but no life'; in another the people were 'amazed, but he could find not one who had any deep or lasting conviction.' But after a time he is able to record that at St. Ives, 'the dread of God fell upon us while I was speaking, so that I could hardly utter a word.'

At length a change came over the scene, for, while he was preaching at St. Ives, the mob of the

town burst into the room, and created much disturbance, roaring and striking those that stood in the way, 'as though Legion himself possessed them.' Finding the uproar increased, he went into the midst, and brought the ringleader up to the desk, receiving a blow on the side of the head while doing so. 'After which,' he says, 'we reasoned the case, until he grew milder and milder, and at length undertook to quiet his companions.' On one Sunday he preached at four different places, and, feeling no weariness at all, concluded the day with the Society at St. Ives, rejoicing and praising God.

After his return to Bristol, he made a brief tour into Wales, preaching, praying, and talking hour by hour. Then, fearing his strength would not suffice for preaching more than four times in the day, he abridged his service with the Society at Cardiff in the early morning to half an hour, afterwards taking two services at the Castle, one in Wenvo church, and one in Porthkerry. He employed several days in examining and purging the Bristol Society, which, after several were put away, still consisted of more than seven hundred persons. He gave the next week to Kingswood, and found but a few things to reprove.

The Leaders now brought in what had been contributed in their several classes toward the debt incurred in the building of the New Room, which was at once discharged. This was the end in view when the Society was first divided into classes (see p. 366). The contributions were afterwards given to the poor, and subsequently to the work of God generally.

On his way to the Midlands, he preached at

Painswick, Gutherston, and Evesham, and the next day called on the Rev. Samuel Taylor, of Quinton, Gloucestershire, a powerful and impressive preacher, and a successful itinerant evangelist: one of several clergymen—like the Revs. John Hodges of Wenvo, Henry Piers of Bexley, Charles Manning of Hayes, Vincent Perronet of Shoreham, John Meriton of the Isle of Man, Richard Thomas Bateman of St. Bartholomew's the Great, London, and others—who, being much benefited by the ministry of the Methodists, and thoroughly sympathizing with their laudable aims, identified themselves with them, welcomed them to their pulpits, and attended their Conferences. Passing through Birmingham, he came to Wednesbury, where he met with such treatment as seems almost incredible, and where he appeared likely to end his days. His brother followed him in two or three days, and gives the following graphic account:

'I was much encouraged by the faith and patience of our brethren from Wednesbury; who gave me some particulars of the late persecution. My brother, they told me, had been dragged about for three hours by the mob of three towns. Those of Wednesbury and Darlaston were disarmed by a few words he spoke, and thenceforward laboured to screen him from their old allies of Walsall; till they were overpowered themselves and most of them knocked down. Three of the brethren and one young woman kept near him all the time, striving to intercept the blows. Sometimes he was almost borne upon their shoulders through the violence of the multitude, who struck at him continually that he might fall. And if he had once been down he would have rose no more. Many times he escaped through his lowness of stature; and his enemies

were struck down by them. His feet never once slipped; for in their hands the angels bore him up. The ruffians ran about asking, "Which is the minister?" and lost and found and lost him again. That Hand which struck the men of Sodom and the Syrians blind withheld or turned them aside. Some cried, "Drown him! throw him into a pit!" Some, "Hang him up upon the next tree!" Others, "Away with him! away with him!" and some did him the infinite honour to cry, in express terms, "Crucify him!" One and all said, "Kill him!" But they were not agreed what death to put him to. In Walsall several said, "Carry him out of the town: don't kill him here; don't bring his blood upon us!"

'To some who cried, "Strip him, tear off his clothes!" he mildly answered, "That you need not do: I will give you my clothes, if you want them." In the intervals of tumult, he spoke, the brethren assured me, with as much composure and correctness as he used to do in their Societies. The Spirit of glory rested upon him. As many as he spoke to, or but laid his hands on, he turned into friends. He did not wonder (as he himself told me) that the martyrs should feel no pain in the flames; for none of their blows hurt him, although one was so violent as to make his nose and mouth gush out with blood.

'Two justices remanded him to the mob. The Mayor of Walsall refused him protection when entering his house, for fear the mob should pull it down. Just as he was within another door, one fastened his hand in his hair, and drew him backward almost to the ground. A brother, at the peril of his life, fell on the man's hand, and bit it, which forced him to loose his hold.

'The instrument of his deliverance at last was the ring-leader of the mob, the greatest profligate in the country. He carried him through the river upon his shoulders. A sister they threw into it. Another's arm they broke. No further hurt was done our people; but many of our enemies were sadly wounded. The minister of Darlaston sent my

brother word, he would join with him in any measures to punish the rioters; that the meek behaviour of our people, and their constancy in suffering, convinced him the counsel was of God; and he wished all his parish Methodists.¹

Wesley himself tells us that a lusty man just behind struck at him several times with a large oaken stick; with which, if he had struck him once on the back of his head, it would have saved him all further trouble; but every time the blow was turned aside, he knew not how; that another came rushing through the press, and, raising his arm to strike, on a sudden let it drop, and only stroked his head, saying, 'What soft hair he has.' He says that from the beginning to the end he found the same presence of mind, as if he had been sitting in his study; that he took no thought for one moment before another, only once it came into his mind, that if they should throw him into the river, it would spoil the papers that were in his pocket. For himself he did not doubt but he could swim across, having but a thin coat and a light pair of boots. 'The next morning,' he says, 'as I rode through the town on my way to Nottingham, every one I met expressed such a cordial affection that I could scarce believe what I saw and heard.' He closes his account by inserting the following document, as great a curiosity of its kind, he believed, as was ever seen in England:

'To all High Constables, Petty Constables, and other of his Majesty's Peace Officers, within the county of Staffordshire, and particularly to the Constable of Tipton:—

'Whereas, we, his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said county of Stafford, have received information, that

¹ C. Wesley's *Journal*, October 25.

several disorderly persons, styling themselves Methodist preachers, go about raising routs and riots, to the great damage of his Majesty's liege people, and against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King.

'These are in his Majesty's name, to command you, and every one of you, within your respective districts, to make diligent search after the said Methodist preachers, and to bring him or them before some of us his said Majesty's Justices of the Peace, to be examined concerning their unlawful doings.

'Given under our hands and seals, this 12th day of October, 1743.

'J. LANE,

'W. PERSEHOUSE.'

And these were the two justices who refused to give him a hearing.

From Nottingham he passed on to Grimsby, narrowly escaping drowning in crossing the Trent. At Grimsby he designed to preach at the Market Cross, but the rain prevented, and they were at a loss what to do, when a 'woman that was a sinner' offered a convenient place. In the evening service the poor creature cried out, 'O, sir! what must I do to be saved?' Wesley, who had been informed of her case, replied, 'Return instantly to your husband.' 'How can I? He is above a hundred miles off, at Newcastle-on-Tyne.' He said, 'I am going for Newcastle in the morning; you may go with me. William Blow shall take you behind him. And so he did'—a singular and touching incident. He remained at Newcastle about three weeks, preaching and regulating the Societies in and around, returning, through the principal towns on his way, to London, where he finished up the remaining weeks of the year in examining the

Society, in which, after he had put many aside, there remained about 2,200 members.

Early in the new year Wesley left London for Bristol, to examine the Society; 'not before it was needed. For the plague was begun; many crying out, "Faith! faith! Believe! believe!" but making little account of the fruits of faith, either of holiness or good works.' Few things could give him more pain than such conduct. At the end of the month he returned to London, and received most gratifying accounts of the work which John Haime and other Methodist soldiers, then engaged in the war on the continent, were doing amongst their comrades.

Finding that many deserving persons were in great want, he made an appeal to the Society for help, which resulted in an immediate contribution of near £50 (afterwards raised to £200), which he 'began laying out the very next hour in linen, woollen, and shoes.'

Painful reports still reached him of fresh riots at Wednesbury, and also at Birmingham and Nottingham, where his brother had been labouring. As gross misrepresentation of the facts had been spread abroad, he issued a tract entitled *Modern Christianity Exemplified at Wednesbury*, consisting of signed documents by eye-witnesses. It is a severe indictment of the persecutors.

He had arranged to leave town, but a proclamation having been published requiring all Papists to go out of London, he determined to stay another week, that he might cast off all occasion of reproach, on the ground of his belonging to the Papists. Then, a brief visit to Bristol was followed by a summons from the

Justices of Surrey to attend their court, where he took the oaths to his Majesty, and signed the declaration against popery, thus publicly clearing himself from the foolish charge of complicity with the Church of Rome.

The brothers now agreed that it was enough for one of them to stay in London, while the other endeavoured to strengthen and extend the Societies in other parts of the country. Accordingly Wesley set out on March 26 for a three months' tour. He now paid his second visit to Cornwall, where scenes similar to those already recorded daily occurred. Now he was appealing to drunken and swearing men and women whom he met with on his way ; now traversing the snowclad hills and downs, or arriving at his destination wet and weary, after having been battered by wind and hail and rain for hours together, to preach to the assembled multitudes, whom even rain-storms and hail could not drive away ; now he is saluted with loud huzzas, and stones and dirt ; then finding abundant reward in the fidelity and growth of the Societies. Once he attends the Church services to hear his 'sect' declaimed against as enemies of the Church, Jacobites, Papists, and what not ; an announcement that bore its fruit in a barbarous assault upon some of his preachers, frustrated, however, by the prompt action of the mayor of the place.

After nearly a month spent in Cornwall, he took ship to Wales, and spent a week in going from town to town, at length reaching Fonmon Castle, where he 'found a natural wish for ease and a resting-place. But not yet : eternity is at hand !' He little knew that forty-seven years' hard labour lay before him.

From Bristol he set out for the north, preaching at Gloucester; at Cheltenham, on 'By grace are ye saved through faith,' 'to a company who seemed to understand just as much of the matter as if he had spoken Greek;' at Gutherton, where he found a people of another kind, with whom he had a remarkable blessing at five the next morning; at noon he preached at Stanley; at three at Tewkesbury; and in the evening in the once stately Benedictine Abbey at Evesham. Thence he proceeded to Birmingham, Sheffield, and Epworth, where he went immediately to return thanks to one who had befriended poor John Downes, lately pressed for a soldier, and hurried off to Lincoln gaol because he was a preacher. Riding from Epworth toward Fishlake, he was met by two or three persons, who begged him not to go that way, for, said they, the town was all up in arms, many having made themselves drunk, and so were ready for any manner of mischief. He accordingly rode to Sykehouse another way: some reporting the mob was just a-coming, and would certainly fire the house, or pull it to the ground, he told them that then the only way was to make the best use of it while it stood, and began expounding at once.

He then took the shortest road to Birstal, where he learnt that John Nelson, his faithful helper, had on that very ground been pressed for a soldier. Wesley, mindful of his suffering friend, wrote letters to him. He paid a visit to Lancashire, at the request of John Bennet, a successful lay preacher, who formed many Societies in the counties of Chester, Derby, and Lancaster, and of whom we shall hear more presently. He spent a quiet week

in Newcastle, being much engaged in writing ; then another in visiting the classes, and afterwards, for some days, those in the country. On the Sunday, before leaving, he attended six services, in five of which he himself officiated.

At Durham he met John Nelson and Thomas Beard, 'another quiet and peaceable man who had latterly been torn from his trade and wife and children, and sent away as a soldier, for no other crime, either committed or pretended, than that of calling sinners to repentance.'

On his return to London, the first Conference was held in the Foundry. This event marked so distinctive an epoch in the history of Methodism, and inaugurated so many new and interesting features in the great movement, that it is needful to give some particular account of it. Hitherto Wesley had called to his help such persons as he judged to be fitted by personal character and suitable gifts to take part in the work. That work, as he simply described it, was 'to call sinners to repentance.' He chose the spheres of their labour, and held himself responsible for their maintenance ; they engaging to be obedient to him, as sons to a father. During the evangelistic tours which he had already made, he had discerned the signs of a great work opening out before him. Wherever he went, numbers of the spiritually famished people received the Word, notwithstanding the abounding indifference, wickedness, and antagonism. Acting in harmony with the principle he had avouched—'the world is my parish'—he proceeded to roam abroad over the country, without regard to ecclesiastical boundaries. This

course, we have seen, he had already justified—at least to his own satisfaction. The abounding sinfulness of the spiritually destitute and neglected people, the inefficiency of so large a number of the clergy, the knowledge that a gospel of salvation had been committed to his trust, and the proofs which were continually presenting themselves that his truth and his method availed to the saving of the guilty, constituted, in his view, a veritable call of God ; while the convictions wrought upon his mind in regard to this work he believed were made by the Spirit of God. The openings which presented themselves were providential openings. He sought the Divine guidance in all his ways, and he accepted the course of events as a Divine response to his prayer. He believed that God was with him ; that he was an agent of the Divine will ; that he was carrying out the Divine behests. The fruits of his work, as truly as the fruits of the field, he believed to be of God. In events where others saw only ordinary contingencies, he saw the Divine arrangement. If he was laid low in affliction, it was the Lord's hand that smote him ; if he was restored, or defended from a danger, it was by the same power. To such an extent did he thus acknowledge God in all his ways, that his opponents, at least, judged him to be the victim of enthusiasm, which, in a godless age, was synonymous with any recognition of a Divine interposition in the affairs of men. He strove to live and think and speak for God. To God he rendered his account. An approving conscience was to him the voice of God. God was with him. So he believed. What others believed of him was a

matter of supreme indifference. Let him be called an enthusiast: that was to him no longer a term of reproach. A fanatic he was not. He never looked for results without adequate means. He had a high sense of human duty and responsibility. He saw the need of human prudence and sagacity. God worked through His instruments, not independently of them; therefore let those instruments strive to be as efficient as possible. Let them bring to their work their best powers, cultivated as far as circumstances would allow, their utmost prudence, their most careful judgment, their ripest experience, and their most fervent, even fiery zeal. Let them combine for this purpose. He did not believe himself to be infallible, any more than he believed any one else to be; he knew the need of brotherly help. Then let each contribute his measure of counsel and suggestion for the guidance of all. Therefore let them *confer*.

He gives the following account of the first of these notable gatherings: 'In June, 1744, I desired my brother and a few other clergymen to meet me in London, to consider how we should proceed to save our own souls and them that heard us. After some time, I invited the lay preachers that were in the house to meet us. We conferred together for several days, and were much comforted and strengthened thereby.

'After some time spent in prayer, the design of our meeting was proposed, namely, to consider: 1. What to teach; 2. How to teach, etc.; and 3. What to do, *i.e.* how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice.'

They then proceeded to consider the doctrine of Justification ; and, on the day following, the doctrine of Sanctification. Then points of discipline were discussed ; and finally the question of any further union with the Moravians, or with Mr. Whitefield. To the latter they would propose a conference, when he returned to London ; the former 'absolutely decline it.' It was proposed that those who could should meet again on November 1, at Newcastle ; February 1, at Bristol ; May 1, at London. But the next meeting was not held until August 1, 1745, when it assembled in London, and the conference became an annual assembly.

The 'minutes' of the meetings were taken down by Wesley in a small pocket memorandum-book, and a similar copy was made by John Bennet. It is not probable that a general minute book was provided, but each of those who were present could have a copy. Both Wesley and Bennet added the minutes of the succeeding four years (1745-48). Of these sufficient portions have been preserved to enable us to trace the order of procedure with exactness. The whole of the minutes were drawn up in the form of questions and answers (a favourite method of Wesley's), which by their perspicuity and exactness show Wesley's hand throughout.

The following are some of the questions considered :

'Q. 9. Do we separate from the Church? A. We conceive not. We hold communion therewith for conscience' sake, by constantly attending both the word preached and the Sacraments administered therein.

‘Q. 12. Do not you entail a schism on the Church? —*i.e.* Is it not probable that your hearers after your death will be scattered into all sects and parties? Or that they will form themselves into a distinct sect? A. 1. We are persuaded the body of our hearers will even after our death remain in the Church, unless they be thrust out. 2. We believe, notwithstanding, either that they will be thrust out, or that they will leaven the whole Church. 3. We do, and will do, all we can to prevent those consequences which are supposed likely to happen after our death. 4. But we cannot with good conscience neglect the present opportunity of saving souls while we live, for fear of consequences which may possibly or probably happen after we are dead.’

Four interesting questions were asked bearing directly on their present work. To the question, ‘Is field-preaching unlawful?’ the reply is, ‘We do not conceive it is contrary to any law, either of God or man. Yet (to avoid giving any needless offence) we never preach without doors when we can with any conveniency preach within.’ And to ‘What is the best way of spreading the gospel?’ the response is, ‘To go a little and a little farther from London, Bristol, St. Ives, Newcastle, or any other society. So, a little leaven would spread with more effect and less noise, and help would always be at hand.’

This interesting gathering being ended, Wesley proceeded to ‘purge the Society of all who did not walk according to the Gospel,’ reducing the number to less than nineteen hundred; ‘but number,’ he says, ‘is an inconsiderable circumstance.’

On August 24 of this year he preached at Oxford

his last sermon before the University. Dr. Kennicott, then an undergraduate at Wadham College, says of him, 'He came to Oxford some time before, and preached frequently every day in courts, public-houses, and elsewhere. On Friday morning, having held forth twice in private, at five and at eight, he came to St. Mary's at ten o'clock. There were present the vice-chancellor, the proctors, most of the heads of houses, a vast number of gownsmen, and a multitude of private people, both brethren and sisters. He is neither tall nor fat; for the latter would ill become a Methodist. His black hair [dark auburn] quite smooth, and parted very exactly, added to a peculiar composure in his countenance, showed him to be an uncommon man. His prayer was soft, short, and conformable to the rules of the University. His text was Acts iv. 31. He spoke it very slowly, and with an agreeable emphasis. . . . He is allowed to be a man of great parts, and that by the excellent Dean of Christ Church (Dr. Conybeare); for the day he preached, the Dean generously said of him, "John Wesley will always be thought a man of sound sense, though an enthusiast." However, the vice-chancellor sent for the sermon, and I hear the heads of colleges intend to show their resentment.'¹

Charles said, 'At ten I walked with my brother, and Mr. Piers and Meriton, to St. Mary's, where my brother bore his testimony before a crowded audience, much increased by the racers. Never have I seen a more attentive congregation. They did not let a word slip them. Some of the Heads stood up the whole time, and fixed their eyes on him. If they

¹ *Methodist Magazine*, 1866, p. 44, quoted by Tyerman.

can endure sound doctrine like his, he will surely leave a blessing behind him.’¹ Wesley himself says, ‘I preached, I suppose for the last time, at St. Mary’s. Be it so. I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul.’ He left Oxford about noon, preached at Wycombe in the evening, and returned to London next day. Here very painful news reached him of the brutal treatment of the Society by the mob in Cornwall ; whilst, on the other hand, he received further gratifying accounts of the work done by Methodist soldiers in the army in camp near Brussels. A brief trip to Bristol completed the travelling for the year.

The year had scarce begun, when he made the following reflection : ‘I had often wondered at myself, and sometimes mentioned it to others, that ten thousand cares, of various kinds, were no more weight or burden to my mind than ten thousand hairs to my head. Perhaps I began to ascribe something of this to my own strength. And thence it might be, that on *Sunday*, 13, that strength was withheld, and I felt what it was to be troubled about many things. One, and another, hurrying me continually, it seized upon my spirit more and more, till I found it absolutely necessary to fly for my life ; and that without delay. So the next day I took horse, and rode away for Bristol.’ We do not recall another instance of a similar failure. But he had no sooner reached his Bristol home than his soul was lightened of her load, of ‘that insufferable weight which had lain upon his mind, more or less, for several days ;’ and to his great joy he found reason to offer a psalm

¹ C. Wesley’s *Journal*, August 24, 1744.

of praise for the state of the Bristol and Kingswood Societies.

He returned to London, and set out for Newcastle in company with one of his lay preachers—Richard Moss. They found travelling exceedingly difficult, as they were piloted through ‘the mire and water and snow,’ and still more so when not only ‘the snows became deeper, which made the causeways in many places unpassable’ (and turnpike-roads were not known in these parts of England till some years after), ‘but likewise because the hard frost succeeding the thaw had made all the ground like glass. We were often obliged to walk,’ he says, ‘it being impossible to ride; and our horses several times fell down while we were leading them. . . . Many a rough journey have I had before, but one like this I never had; between wind, and hail, and rain, and ice, and snow, and driving sleet, and piercing cold. But it is past.’ Such troubles sat lightly upon him.

While at Newcastle he received a visit from a Mr. Adams, of Osmotherley, about forty miles distant, who, having heard strange accounts of the Methodists, could not rest till he had inquired for himself. Wesley invited him to stay, if he could live on ‘our Lenten fare.’ He remained several days, and returned home satisfied with his journey. A fortnight later Wesley, preaching at Northallerton, met the same Mr. Adams with several of his neighbours. On his expressing a wish that Wesley could have time to preach in his house at Osmotherley, he replied he *would* have time, and ordered the horses out immediately. They reached the village between nine and ten. In an hour the people were gathered

together, and at eleven o'clock at night he preached to them. It was after midnight ere he lay down, but he thanked God he felt no weariness at all. Yet he had preached that morning at half-past four at South Biddick, at eight in the open at Chester-le-street; and had reproved a company of swearers at Darlington. He preached again the next morning at five, to a large congregation, many of the people keeping watch all night for fear they should not wake in the morning. He found many of them were, or had been, Papists, and Adams had been their priest. From that day to this there has always been a Society in Osmotherley.¹

At Grimsby he preached to a 'stupidly rude and noisy congregation;' but he singled out the leader, and fastened upon him, till he chose to withdraw. He was cheered by words addressed to him in conversation by a clergyman who had been led to salvation by reading some of his writings. At Epworth he preached 'in the house' at five; about eight at the cross, and again in the evening 'to most of the adults of the town;' and in the church listened to another railing accusation. At Birstal he was constrained to continue his discourse 'an hour longer than usual;' God pouring out such a blessing that he knew not how to leave off. At John Bennet's request he next visited several places in Lancashire and Cheshire. He preached at Altrincham at five (as he had done the previous evening), at nine near Stockport, about noon at Bongs in Derbyshire, and at five near Chapel-en-le-Frith, where a miller, near whose

¹ See an interesting paper on Adams and Osmotherley in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. iii. p. 89.



SEAL OF THE METHODIST CONFERENCE.



Wesley
Breuer Am?
His Gift to —
Henry Moore
London
August 1788
Vive Rodie!

FACSIMILE PAGES OF JOHN WESLEY'S FIELD BIBLE.

The Seal and the Bible are held as the insignia of office
by the President of the Conference.

pond he stood, let out the water, 'which fell with a great noise;' but it was labour lost, for he was so strengthened that he was heard to the outskirts of the crowd. He came on through several towns to Wednesbury, where the madness of the people had been stilled, and he preached without any noise or hindrance at all. Thence he hastened to Gosta Green near Birmingham, where he had appointed to preach; but it was dangerous for any who stood to hear, for the stones and dirt were flying from every side, almost without interruption, for nearly an hour. At Oxford he felt he could not spend a single day without heaviness of heart for his brethren's sake.

Early in June he again reached Bristol, where he found the Antinomians had tried to seduce his people, but not more than seven out of seven hundred were turned out of the way. During a month's tour in Cornwall he preached by invitation in several churches; but he met with the rudest and most violent treatment by mobs, equalled only by that which he received at Wednesbury. He was also subject to gross annoyance by the press-gang, and by weak or wicked magistrates and constables. His deliverance at Falmouth seemed to him more strikingly providential than even his rescue at Walsall.

Finding his way to Wales, he felt, 'as it were, in a new world, in peace and honour and abundance;' and in company with his friend Mr. Hodges, Rector of Wenbo, pursued his work with vigour and joy. He spent some time in Bristol, and in visiting the little Societies in Wilts and Somerset. At the beginning of August the second Conference was held. The views expressed at the previous Conference on

Justification and Sanctification were reviewed and expanded, especially in their practical aspects, and several matters of discipline were considered. One question relates to Wesley in particular. 'Q. 10. Can I attend any more Societies than I do?—seeing this would imply the spending less time with the rest. A. It seems not; at least, till the Societies already formed are more established in grace.' But circumstances seem soon to have over-ridden this opinion. 'Q. Can I travel less in order to write more? A. As yet it does not seem advisable.' The question, 'Can we have a seminary for labourers yet?' and the answer, 'Not till God gives us a proper tutor,' may partly explain why this matter was so long deferred.

The Conference over, he returned to London. Many were grieved at an advertisement which Count Zinzendorf had directed to be published, declaring that 'he and his people had no connection with Mr. John and Charles Wesley;' on which Wesley remarked, 'I believed that declaration would do us no more harm than the prophecy which the Count subjoined to it—that we should soon run our heads against the wall. We will not,' he dryly adds, 'if we can help it.'

Leaving London for a second journey to the north, he called on Dr. Doddridge at Northampton. At Leeds he preached and met the Society, the mob pelting them with dirt and stones great part of the way home. The next night the company was larger, so was the mob, 'and in higher spirits, being ready,' he says 'to knock out all our brains, for joy that the Duke of Tuscany was Emperor!' At Newcastle the inhabitants were in the utmost consternation, news

having been received that the Pretender had entered Edinburgh ; but a great concourse of people listened to him in the evening. The town being put into a state of siege, he took the opportunity of preaching at Gateshead, where, in one of the services, the congregation was so moved that he began again and again, and knew not how to conclude. After remaining in Newcastle and the neighbourhood about seven weeks, he passed through the West Riding of Yorkshire and Cheshire, into Staffordshire. At Wednesbury town end he stuck fast in the quagmire in the dark ; some coming with candles, he left them to extricate his horse, while he walked on to the house where he was formerly mobbed, and preached ; and on the following day (Sunday), at five and eight, at Wednesbury, then to church ; at one at Tipton, probably at church again in the afternoon ; at four again at Wednesbury, 'to well-nigh the whole town ;' then would come the Society meeting. Thus his work was beginning to tell on the town, though it did not seem to affect his strength.

From London he retired to Newington, to finish the *Farther Appeal* ; he also wrote *A Word to a Drunkard*. He spent an hour with an interesting convert, Mr. John Frederick Lampe, musical composer for Covent Garden Theatre, a professed infidel, who had been brought to a better mind by reading the *Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*.¹

¹ He became a sincere Christian, devoted his musical talents, which were considerable, to the composition of sacred music, and maintained an honourable course to the end of his life. A hymn entitled, *The Musician's Hymn*, by Charles Wesley, had reference to him, and it drew tears from Lampe's eyes when he first read it ; an equally beautiful composition from the same pen was, *On the Death of Mr. Lampe*.—*Journal and Poetry of Charles Wesley*, i. 432.

The alarms still increased in London on account of the nearer approach of the Jacobite rebels. A National Fast was proclaimed. Services were held throughout the City, and Wesley preached at the Foundery at four in the morning, at nine at West Street, and at five in the evening at the Foundery again. He says, 'abundance of people were present, as also (we understood) at every place of worship throughout London and Westminster. We had within a short time given away some thousands of little tracts among the common people. And it pleased God hereby to provoke others to jealousy. Insomuch that the Lord Mayor had ordered a large quantity of papers dissuading from cursing and swearing to be printed, and distributed to the Train-bands. And this day *An Earnest Exhortation to Serious Repentance* was given at every church door, in or near London, to every person who came out; and one left at the house of every householder who was absent from church. I doubt not but God gave a blessing therewith. And perhaps then the sentence of desolation was recalled. It was on this very day that the Duke's army was so remarkably preserved in the midst of the ambuscades at Clifton Moor.'

Having received a long letter from Mr. Westley Hall, his brother-in-law, pressing him and his brother to renounce the Church of England (for their not complying with which advice he soon renounced them), he wrote in reply at full length. Some of the sentiments therein expressed may be here recorded, as they contain certain Church principles from which Wesley ere long withdrew. On the charge that they undertook to defend some things

that were not defensible by the Word of God, he replies :

‘We believe it would not be right for us to administer either Baptism or the Lord’s Supper, unless we had a commission so to do from those Bishops whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the Apostles.

‘We believe there is, and always was, in every Christian Church (whether dependent on the Bishop of Rome or not) an outward priesthood, ordained by Jesus Christ, and an outward sacrifice offered therein, by men authorized to act as ambassadors of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

‘We believe that the threefold order of Ministers is not only authorized by its Apostolic institution, but also by the written word ;’ and he desired to hear and weigh whatever might be said to the contrary.

Charged, further, with giving up some things which were defended by Acts of Parliament, he replies, ‘Do you not here quite overlook one circumstance, which might be a key to our whole behaviour? —namely, that we no more look upon these filthy abuses which adhere to our Church [such as many of the laws, customs, and practices of the Ecclesiastical Courts] as part of the building, than we look upon any filth which may adhere to the walls of Westminster Abbey as part of that structure.’

To a third charge, that they defended and practised other things in open contradiction to the orders of the Church of England, he declares (1) They would obey all the laws of that Church—the Rubrics, but not the customs of the Ecclesiastical

Courts, 'so far as they could with a safe conscience ;' a reservation which he avowed at the Conference. (2) That they would obey, with the same restriction, the Bishops, as executors of those laws. But their bare will, distinct from those laws, they did not profess to obey at all. This principle he applied to field-preaching, the use of lay-preachers, and the rules and directions given to the societies ; and he knew neither the man who had forbidden these, nor the law by which he could forbid them. Neither did he know the Rubrics which forbade persons to communicate in the chapels. Wesley's attitude towards the Church of England is clearly set forth in this document. He was, he aimed to be, a loyal and obedient son of the Church. But the action of many of the clergy and of some of the Bishops towards him and his work was such as to compel him to discriminate between the authority of the Bishops when administering the true laws of the Church, and when merely giving effect to their own prejudices. It is somewhat singular that he should have been led so precisely to define his views on Church organization immediately before those views underwent the marked change which is presently to be indicated.

In addition to his extensive travelling, which had gradually increased during the first half of this decade, Wesley had devoted much time to the preparation of various books and pamphlets for the press, the use of which he always regarded as a valuable subsidiary to his primary work of preaching. His brother also had been active in poetical writing. Wesley's publications in these five years included twenty-six pamphlets of extracts from different

writers on important doctrinal and practical subjects ; a dialogue on Predestinarianism, and two dialogues on Antinomianism ; three pamphlets specially addressed to Methodists ; five others on various topics ; three sermons ; eight tracts for free distribution—‘Words’ addressed to different classes of people, Swearers, Sabbath-breakers, Drunkards, etc. He also issued three valuable volumes, being slight abridgements of Scougal’s *Life of God in the Soul*, and of Law’s *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call to a Religious Life* ; together with *Instructions for Children*, being lessons adapted to the youngest ; *A Collection of Receipts for the Poor* ; *A Collection of Prayers for Families* ; *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, which was used in some of his congregations for nearly a hundred years ; a small *Collection of Hymns* ; and *A Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems*, in three volumes. But the work which most effectively represents his powers as a writer, and which exerted a greater influence than any of his writings at that time, was the *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*. It is a clear statement of the principles and work of Wesley and of the Methodists generally, and a triumphant vindication of them from many charges, and at the same time a most impressive condemnation of the conduct of the clergy. It contains also an appeal—earnest indeed—to the members of the Church of England first, and to others, on the moral state of the nation. It is a vigorous and eloquent production. ‘These earnest and dignified defences deserve to be mentioned by the side of the Apologies of the early Church.’¹

¹ Punshon.

Charles Wesley had also produced two small publications of *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love*; *An Elegy*, of five hundred and seventy lines, *on the Death of Robert Jones, Esq., of Fonnmon Castle*; one volume of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*; two pamphlets of *Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution*; a volume of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, and a number of *Hymns on the Nativity*.

Although during this year much of Wesley's time was absorbed by London, yet he spent upwards of five months in traversing the country in pursuance of his evangelistic work, reiterating his appeals to the spiritually indifferent, and proclaiming the Gospel to all, lovingly and with great earnestness. The course of his journeys lay, in the first instance, to Bristol, thence to Newcastle; returning by way of Bristol to London—a tour which occupied a little over two months. No explanation has been given why he chose this particular route in the early and severe months of the year. The journeys were full of interest as usual, and the labour was not in any way abated.

Within a month after writing to his brother-in-law Hall the letter which has just been considered, in which he declared his belief in the High Church doctrine of Episcopacy, its apostolical succession and authority, he was riding westward; reading, as he rode, the *Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church*; at first published anonymously, but now known to have been written by (at the time) Sir Thomas (afterwards Lord) King. On which he remarks, 'In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught;

but if so, it would follow that Bishops and Presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a church independent of all others.' Wesley's wide reading and open mind, of course exposed him to change of view, even on the highest subjects of human thought. The immediate bearing of all this on his future procedure will appear in the minutes of the Conference of the following year, and at later periods in his career, particularly in his presbyterial ordinations of preachers, first for the American, then for the Scottish, and ultimately for the English Methodist Churches.¹

In the middle of February, Wesley, in company with one of his helpers, set forth for Newcastle. They pushed their way, he says, 'through thick and thin.' The brooks were so swollen with the late rains, that the common roads were impassable; but their guide, knowing the country, brought them through the fields, so that they escaped the dangerous waters. They reached Evesham wet and dirty enough. Setting out from Birmingham before it was light, they soon found the rain changed to snow, which the northerly wind drove full in their faces, encrusting them over from head to foot in less than an hour's time. He adds, 'We inquired of one, who lived at the entrance of the moors, which was our best way to Stafford. "Sir," said he, "'tis a thousand pound to a penny that you do not come there to-day.

¹ In the remarks of Canon Overton (*John Wesley: 'English Leaders of Religion' Series*, pp. 197-201), this subject is regarded from the Church of England point of view. On the other hand, the same is considered from the Methodist standpoint in Dr. Rigg's *The Churchmanship of John Wesley*, a work which merits careful reading.

Why, 'tis four long miles to the far side of this common; and in a clear day I am not sure to go right across it: and now all the roads are covered with snow; and it snows so, that you cannot see before you." However, we went on, and I believe did not go ten yards out of the way till we came into Stafford.' In the evening he preached, 'and joined a few together as a society.'

At Leeds, when returning from preaching, he was followed by a great mob, who threw whatever came to hand. He was struck several times, once or twice in the face. He walked to the Recorder's, and told him the case, who promised to prevent the like for the time to come. He reached Newcastle, but not by way of the dales, the snow being so deep. Here he had abundance of occupation in visiting the sick, for a raging sickness was baffling all the efforts of the physicians, and spreading daily in the town. No less than two thousand of the soldiers were supposed to have died since their encampment there. At Placey, where he delighted to preach, in the middle of the sermon, a vehement storm began which was driven full upon them by the north-east wind; but the congregation regarded it not, and stood their ground to hear the Word.

At Nottingham the work had been greatly hindered by the trifling and disorderly conduct of some of the Society. He made short work of it, cutting off all such at a stroke, and leaving only the little handful who, as far as could be judged, were in earnest to save their souls. Alas for the evil surroundings, and the low life of the town! Returning to Birmingham, he found that Antinomianism of a

very bad type had taken root there and in the neighbourhood. He gives the following conversation, 'dreadful as it is,' between himself and one of their 'pillars,' wherein, as he says, 'every serious person may see the true picture of Antinomianism full-grown; and may know what these men mean by their favourite phrase, of being "perfect in Christ, not in themselves"':—'Do you believe you have nothing to do with the Law of God?' 'I have not; I am not under the Law; I live by faith.' 'Have you, as living by faith, a right to everything in the world?' 'I have; all is mine since Christ is mine.' 'May you then take anything you will anywhere? Suppose out of a shop, without the consent or knowledge of the owner?' 'I may, if I want it; for it is mine. Only I will not give offence.' 'Have you also a right to all the women in the world?' 'Yes, if they consent.' 'And is not that a sin?' 'Yes, to him that thinks it is sin; but not to those whose *hearts are free*.' He adds, 'The same thing that wretch, Roger Ball, affirmed in Dublin. Surely these are the firstborn children of Satan.' This is as difficult for us to understand as are some of the conditions of life in the Corinthian Church. But how greatly such a state of things must have increased the Evangelist's labour and sorrow!

On reaching Bristol, he laid the first stone of a new and larger school-house at Kingswood.

On his way to London he preached at Brentford, when many got together and threatened great things. But he took two or three of their chiefs by the hand, and desired them to come in. They did so, and were calm and silent. It was his rule, he afterwards informs

us, confirmed by long experience, always to look a mob in the face.

Returning to Bristol after a month's stay in London, he held his third Conference, at which were present John and Charles Wesley, four clergymen, and four or five lay assistants. The meeting was not regarded as a clerical one, for 'the most serious and sensible Band Leaders where the Conference is, and any pious and judicious stranger who may be occasionally in the place,' were judged to be of 'the properest persons to be present.' Points of doctrine and discipline, and many practical questions, were discussed. Some of the questions have a special interest as affecting the evangelistic work. *E.g.* 'Q. In what view are we and our helpers to be considered? *A.* Perhaps as extraordinary messengers, designed of God to provoke the others to jealousy'—a conviction that was afterwards deepened and more clearly defined. 'Q. What is a sufficient call of Providence to a new place, suppose Edinburgh or Dublin? *A.* (1) An invitation from some one that is worthy, from a serious man, fearing God, who has a house to receive us. (2) A probability of doing more good by going thither than by staying longer where we are. Q. Ought we not diligently to observe in what places God is pleased to pour out His spirit more abundantly? *A.* We ought, and at that time to send more labourers than usual into that part of the harvest. Q. Should we insist more on people's going to church? Shall we set them the example at Bristol? *A.* We will make a trial of the effect of it, by going to St. James's Church every Wednesday and Friday'

There were this year from twelve to eighteen assistants in different parts of the country, which was now, for the first time, divided into seven parts, or 'circuits,' as they were termed. They were: '1. LONDON (which includes Surrey, Kent, Essex, Brentford, Egham, Windsor, Wycombe). 2. BRISTOL (which includes Somersetshire, Portland, Wilts., Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire). 3. CORNWALL. 4. EVESHAM (which includes Shrewsbury, Leominster, Hereford, and from Stroud to Wednesbury). 5. YORKSHIRE (which includes Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutlandshire, Lincolnshire). 6. NEWCASTLE. 7. WALES.' To each of these circuits, one, two, or three preachers were appointed for the ensuing three months. All things were in their initial stages; but arrangements were thus made to carry the Methodist message through the length and breadth of the land, as circumstances permitted. John and Charles Wesley take their turns with the rest. Wesley was to itinerate in the London, Bristol, Evesham, Newcastle, and Wales circuits.

Returning to London directly after the Conference, Wesley settled the 'preaching houses' at Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle in the hands of trustees, reserving only to himself and brother 'the liberty of preaching and lodging there.' With a view to prevent expense to the poorer members of the Society, as well of health as of time and money, he persuaded them to leave off the use of tea, which was both an expensive and an injurious luxury, himself setting the example. At about the same time he instituted a 'Lending Stock' for the benefit of poor tradesmen

in London, who needed a little money to enable them to carry on their business. He collected £50 for the purpose, and lodged it in the hands of stewards, who lent it in small sums, to be returned within three months. Incredible as it might seem, no less than two hundred and fifty were thus helped in one year. He subsequently was able to raise the sum to £120. By this simple device hundreds of the honest poor were helped in their difficulties. One notable example was that of the once penniless Lackington, whose book sales in eighteen years were more than a hundred thousand volumes,—whose income reached to £5000 a year.

He left London on July 21 for his visit to Wales and Cornwall, which occupied him until the early part of October. The entire tour comprised a series of daily and frequent services in churches, houses, or the open air, as circumstances required or opportunity offered, and no considerations of personal comfort or ease were permitted to arrest his fervent and ceaseless labour. Many interesting scenes were witnessed. At Bridgewater he expected much tumult, 'the great vulgar stirring up the small;' but in this he was happily disappointed, an action at law against the rioters, and 'the awe of God which fell upon them,' keeping the whole congregation quiet. At Road the mob threatened loudly; but he adopted his usual plan and looked them in the face, when they stood as men astonished, and neither spoke nor stirred till he had concluded his sermon. Even at Wycombe, it being the day on which the mayor was chosen, abundance of rabble full of strong drink came to the preaching on purpose to disturb, but they soon

fell out among themselves, and he finished his service in tolerable quiet. Thus the brave man went on, step by step, undaunted by danger and undeterred by toil, making his appeal, earnestly, ceaselessly; and by God's blessing it was continually finding its response in the hearts of the people.

One of Wesley's characteristics was his tender pity for the poor and the suffering; and his ingenuity in deriving means for their relief was often called into play. Some of his methods have been noticed. He now attempted another, and as yet untried, method of relieving suffering poverty,—the gratuitous dispensing of simple medicines. He had already instituted a society for the visitation of the sick. Choosing forty-six of those who volunteered for this work, he divided London into twenty-three parts, and directed two volunteers to visit the sick in each division, in order to inquire into their disorders and to procure advice for them, to relieve those who were in want, to advise them on spiritual matters, and 'to do anything for them which he (or she) could.' The expense of this was very great for the Society to bear; he tried sending the sufferers to the hospitals, and seeking medical advice for them; but the advantage was small, and he 'saw the poor people pining away, and several families ruined, and that without remedy.' He then thought of what he calls a desperate expedient. 'I will prepare and give them physic myself.' He felt warranted in doing this because for six or seven and twenty years he 'had made anatomy and physic the diversion of his leisure hours.' He took to his assistance an apothecary and an experienced surgeon. The first day thirty

persons came for the relief; in three weeks the number increased to three hundred; and in six months to twice that number. This charitable work was continued for several years, until the expense became greater than he could bear. Thus he sought to relieve and rescue the indigent and ignorant sufferers, while bending his utmost energies to redeem the immoral. However far he may have been from effecting all at which he aimed, he set in motion an amount of Christian philanthropy that bore good fruit in after years.

In the following year Wesley issued a work entitled *Primitive Physic*. It contained an admirable series of advices on preserving and improving the health, with a collection of simple receipts of remedies easily procured; and if some of the remedies now create a smile, it must be remembered that they were mostly the remedies then in use by the faculty, and quite in harmony with the existing state of medical knowledge. The book passed into more than thirty editions.

He spent most of a week in December at Lewisham in writing. He tells us that he resumed his vegetable diet, which he had now discontinued for several years, and found it to be of use both to soul and body; but a serious illness two years afterwards obliged him to return to the use of animal food.

The first month of the next year was divided between London and Bristol. At the latter place he had one of his many narrow escapes from death, being thrown violently from his horse; but, though much bruised, he rode for two hours and preached. The next day, finding it difficult to walk, he applied one of his 'primitive' remedies—warm treacle—which he

says took away all the pain in an hour, and the lameness in a day or two. Early in February he set out for the north, encountering the most violent storms of wind, rain, snow, and hail nearly the whole way ; but still he rode and preached, and rode again.

At Newcastle he read over with some young men a compendium of rhetoric, and a system of ethics ; and did not see why a man of tolerable understanding might not 'learn in six months' time more of solid philosophy than is commonly learned at Oxford in four (perhaps seven) years.' He narrowly examined the Society, now reduced from eight hundred to four hundred members ; but he accepts the old proverb, 'the half is more than the whole.' He found great cause to rejoice in all the societies around Newcastle, where he continued to labour until the middle of April ; then into Yorkshire, making Birstal his centre ; then into Lancashire, where, after preaching at several places, he came to Rossendale, and 'preached to a large congregation of wild men ; but it pleased God to hold them in chains, so that when he had done none offered any rudeness, but all went quietly away.' He reached Manchester early in the afternoon of the same day, where he had no thought of preaching, but found that public notice had been given that he would do so. He now felt himself to be in a strait. The house would not contain a tenth part of the people who had assembled, and he knew not 'how the unbroken spirits of so large a town would endure preaching in the street ;' besides, having ridden a swift trot for several hours in a sultry day, he was both faint and weary. 'But,' he says, 'after considering I was not going a warfare at my own cost, I

walked straight to Salford Cross. A numberless crowd of people partly ran before, partly followed after me. I thought it best not to sing, but, looking round, asked abruptly, "Why do you look as if you had never seen me before? Many of you have seen me in the neighbouring church, both preaching and administering the Sacrament." I then began, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found : call upon Him while He is near." None interrupted at all, till, as I was drawing to a conclusion, a big man thrust in, with three or four more, and bade them bring out the engine. Our friends desired me to remove into a yard just by, which I did, and concluded in peace.' He then rode to Davyhulme, where he was refreshed both in preaching and in meeting the Society.

He passed on through Cheshire to Sheffield, Nottingham, Wednesbury, and Birmingham, reaching London towards the close of May, after an interesting and encouraging, though toilsome tour.

On the last Sunday in May, after the early five-o'clock service, he preached at seven to a large and well-behaved congregation in Moorfields, and in the afternoon delivered a charity-sermon, at the request of his friend Bateman, in St. Bartholomew the Great, when the church and entrances were so crowded that it was with difficulty he could be got in. Preaching there again a fortnight after, he was compelled to admire the behaviour of the people, none of whom betrayed either lightness or inattention.

At the fourth Conference, held in London in June, those present repeated their resolve to examine all their principles from the foundation. It was agreed that each could submit to the judgment of the rest—in

speculative things, only so far as his own judgment was convinced ; in practical affairs, as far as possible 'without wounding our several consciences.' Beyond this, they concluded, no Christian could submit either to Pope, Council, Bishop, or Convocation. This, they said, is that grand principle of every man's right to private judgment, in opposition to implicit faith in man, on which the Reformers at home and abroad proceeded: 'Every man must think for himself, since every man must give an account for himself to God.'

They further discussed the doctrines of justification by faith, and entire sanctification. They held that 'a church in the New Testament always means a single congregation: that there is no instance or ground therein for a national Church, such being a mere political institution.' The three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons they held to be plainly described in the New Testament, and to have generally obtained in the Churches of the Apostolic age; but they were not assured that God designed the same plan should obtain in all ages, for it is not so asserted in Holy Writ; and, if this were essential to a Christian Church, it would follow that the foreign Reformed Churches are not parts of the Church of Christ—'a consequence full of shocking absurdity.' The Divine right of episcopacy, they say, was first asserted in England about the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, till which time, 'all the bishops and clergy in England continually allowed and joined in the ministrations of those who were not episcopally ordained. There must be in the nature of things numberless accidental variations in the government

of various Churches, no determinate plan of Church government being appointed in Scripture; and no thought of uniformity was entertained until the time of Constantine.'

On the question of field-preaching, it was feared they had limited it too much; (1) because it was their calling to save the lost, whom they must seek, for they could not expect they would seek them; (2) because they were peculiarly called by going out into the highways and hedges (which none would do if they did not) to compel them to come in; (3) because, though 'the house will hold all that come' to the house, it would not hold all that will come to the field; and (4) because they had always found a greater blessing in field-preaching than in any other preaching whatever.

There were found to be more than twenty lay itinerant assistants, and nearly forty who helped 'only in one place'—hence afterwards called 'local-preachers.' The journeys of the former for the following half-year were fixed, John and Charles Wesley taking their places with the others. The above examples, some of the principal subjects discussed, show not only that the Society was settling down more and more into an organized body, but also that the dominating principles of Church government in Wesley's mind were at that time undergoing a change.

The Conference over, after preaching three times on the Sunday, he started in the evening for his western journey. On the way he found the usefulness of his little tract, *A Word to a Swearer*. Setting out one morning at three o'clock, he reached Exeter wet to the skin, where, staying to dry his clothes, he

wrote *A Word to a Freeholder*, in anticipation of an election. His experiences during this tour were similar to those of the previous year. In some places there were changes for the better, as at St. Ives, where he walked to church 'without a single huzza,' rejoicing in the improvement wrought in so short a time; in other places he met with very rough treatment. On two occasions he walked into the midst of riotous mobs, took the ringleaders by the hand, talked to them and quieted them at once. Sometimes the service was interrupted, while at other times the gathering of large numbers greeted him, and gladdened him by their quiet attention. Returning to Bristol, he made his way through Wales to Holyhead, and crossed to Dublin. Here one of his lay-helpers, Thomas Williams, had preceded him, holding his first service probably on Oxmantown Green, near to the Royal Barracks, so often afterwards used for similar services.¹ Multitudes attended Williams's services in the open air, and many were the seals to his ministry, one of whom was Mr. William Lunell, a banker, a member of a noble Huguenot family, who rendered much service to the little Society of Methodists. The account of his signal success had induced Wesley to extend his sphere of action to Ireland. He landed on the morning of Sunday, August 9, and hearing the bells ringing for church, he went at once, and in the evening preached, at the request of the curate, the Rev. Moses Rouquier, A.M., to 'as gay and senseless a congregation' as he had ever seen.

Whitefield had preached in Dublin, in 1738, on

¹ Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*.

his return from his first visit to America. But no society had been formed until 1745, when a pious soldier gathered together a small company of serious persons and preached to them. About this time Benjamin la Trobe, a young Baptist student, became the leader of this little band, until John Cennick, Wesley's helper in Kingswood, now a Moravian, took charge of it. A curious story is told of him. Preaching one day, probably on Christmas Day, he referred to 'the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,' when one of his hearers, a priest, perhaps not knowing the word was in the Bible, called him a 'Swaddler.' The mob took up the designation, and the name spread with rapidity. Cennick had left Dublin when Williams went. The Methodists assembled in an old Lutheran church in Marlborough Street, at the corner of Talbot Street, capable of holding four hundred persons, and four or five times that number in the yard. Here Williams was accustomed to preach; and here Wesley also preached. Many of the rich were there, and many ministers of every denomination; and, though he spoke closely and strongly, none were offended. Indeed, so cheering were appearances, that he believed, if he or his brother could have been there for a few months, there might have been a larger society than even in London itself.

Each morning during his stay he gathered together the Society of about two hundred and eighty members, many of whom appeared to be strong in faith, and of a more teachable spirit than in most parts of England. He explained the rules at large to them. He was led to observe that of the people who came to him few were Irish. 'At least ninety-nine in a hundred,'

he says, 'remain in the religion of their fathers, and no wonder, when the Protestants can find no better way to convert them than penal laws and Acts of Parliament.'

This brief stay of a fortnight, confined to Dublin, was the first of forty-two visits paid by Wesley to Ireland. Tyerman estimates that he spent at least half a dozen years of his laborious life in the Emerald Isle. Methodism has always had a band of devoted ministers in Ireland, whose labours have been characterized by godly fervour, steadfast fidelity, and intrepid zeal. Many of them have been eminent for their high attainments and usefulness.

On his return voyage, being detained by a calm, he had opportunity of 'talking largely with his fellow-passengers and the sailors,' many of whom received his word with gladness. Landing at Holyhead, he returned to Bristol through Wales, preaching wherever he came. At Garth he met his brother going to Ireland, to whom the first news that was brought to him on his arrival in Dublin was, 'the little flock stands fast in the storm of persecution, which arose as soon as my brother left them.' Sad was the state of things there now. The mob had broken into the 'room' and destroyed all before them, tearing away the pulpit, benches, and window-cases, and burning them openly before the gate. Charles says, 'The popish mob, encouraged by the Protestants, are so insolent and outrageous, that, whatever street we pass through, it is up in arms.' But he stayed not his hand, beginning his ministry in the open air with 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,' etc. 'None made disturbance,' he

says, 'till I had ended. Then the rabble attended us with the usual compliments to our lodgings.'

Wesley returned to London, and preached in his favourite place, Moorfields, morning and evening, for some days. He records, 'I know no church in London (that in West Street excepted) where there is so serious a congregation.' At Reading a large company of bargemen, hired to pull down the preaching-house, were induced to attend the service. At the close one of the chief of them rose up and said, 'The gentleman says nothing but what is good; I say so; and there's not a man here shall dare to say otherwise.' The remainder of the year was spent in ceaseless and blessed labour. Of Christmas Day he wrote, 'We met at four, and solemnly rejoiced in God our Saviour. I found much revival in my own soul this day; and so did many others also. Both this and the following days I strongly urged the wholly giving up ourselves to God, and renewing in every point our covenant, that the Lord should be our God.'

In the opening of another year it may be remarked that there is no variation from the record of previous years in the entireness of Wesley's self-dedication to the one supreme aim of his life. It is a daily, hourly devotion to the sacred work of publishing the sinner's Friend, and of labouring to raise and brighten the lives of the miserable multitudes around. The year was begun by a service at four o'clock in the morning amid the sounds of joy and thanksgiving. He found that during the previous year about three hundred persons had received his medicines occasionally; about one hundred had taken them regularly, and

submitted to a proper regimen, of whom more than ninety were completely cured ; the expense being a little over £40. Two hundred and fifty-five persons had been relieved by the 'Lending Stock' in eighteen months.

After a month spent in London he passed on through Bristol (where he began the enlargement of the 'Room') and Wales to Holyhead, *en route* to Ireland, to take the place of his brother, who, with his companions, had endured the most cruel and barbarous treatment at the hands of the wildest mobs, barely escaping with their lives. Wesley himself had already had two narrow escapes from death by accident, and one from the rudeness of a rough mob, who at Shepton Mallet pelted him with dirt, stones, and clods, and then wrecked his lodgings ; but he had happily eluded them. Being detained a fortnight at Holyhead, waiting for a boat, he traversed the country around preaching. Asked to write some little thing to prevent the people leaving the Church, he wrote, *A Word to a Methodist*, which was immediately translated into Welsh and printed. The fervent Calvinistic Methodists were drawing the people from the poor pittance of spiritual food they received in the churches. *Gair Pr Methodist Owaith* is probably the only tract or pamphlet Wesley wrote that has been wholly lost. The Welsh Methodists would not be likely to reprint it.

Wesley reached Dublin on March 8, and remained in Ireland nearly three months. At this time there were ten preachers in Ireland, including the two Wesleys and their companions. They had now three 'preaching-houses' in Dublin ; one in York Street,

called Dolphin's Barn ; one in Marlborough Street ; and one in Skinner's Alley. Wesley formed a high opinion of the Irish character. 'So civil a people as the Irish in general, I never saw, either in Europe or America.' He was very laborious, preaching almost incessantly. But his great exertions and continuous exposure, together with the unsuitable nature of the food provided for him, at one time reduced him to extreme feebleness. The energy of his purpose, however, broke through everything, and, encouraged by the numbers of people that gathered to hear him, he still preached, though at times hardly able to stand. The work was, moreover, gradually being consolidated by the persevering efforts of his lay assistants.

He returned through Wales to Bristol, and to London, arriving on June 1. On the following day the fifth Conference assembled in the Chapel House in Tower Street. On the one Sunday that he spent at Bristol he preached at four o'clock in the Weaver's Hall ; at seven in the Old Orchard ; at ten at Kingswood ; and again at two 'under the sycamore tree.' Again at five in the Old Orchard ; then back to Kingswood, where, after preaching five times, he closed the day with a love-feast. On the following Sunday he preached twice in Moorfields.

The business of this Conference was confined to practical or disciplinary questions, and to matters affecting the new school at Kingswood, which was soon to be opened. For some time Wesley had been desirous of founding a Christian school 'which would not disgrace the Apostolic age.' Accordingly, partly with contributions from friends (an anonymous lady

giving him £800), and partly from the income of his Fellowship, he purchased land at Kingswood, and erected a building suitable to his purpose. He had laid the foundation-stone on April 7, 1746, and the building was opened on Midsummer Day of this year. Close attention was given by the Conference to the affairs of the new school, in which it was decided to receive children between the years of six and ten, and 'to train them in every branch of useful learning, from the alphabet till they were fit as to all acquired accomplishments for the work of the ministry.' The curriculum was to include Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Rhetoric, Geography, Chronology, History, Logic, Ethics, Physics, Geometry, Algebra, Music. The children were to rise at four and go to bed at eight. No time was to be allowed for play, because 'he who plays when he is a child, will play when he is a man.' Provision was made for a course of instruction, extending over several years. No child was to be received unless his parents agreed 'that he should observe all the rules of the school, and that they would not take him away from school, no, not a day, till they take him for good and all.'¹ Provision was also made for a four years' course of academical learning, after the school course was completed. This school did not supplant the one which had been opened some years before for the children of the colliers, and which was continued for sixty years longer. But it was designed for the children of parents living at a distance, and

¹ An account of the vicissitudes of this remarkable institution, which is continued, at Bath, to the present day, may be found in *The History of Kingswood School*. By Three Old Boys. London. Kelly. 1898.

those of his travelling preachers; and he may have had in view the forming of a seminary for the training of his preachers themselves.

One important decision of the Conference was to refuse the advice which had been urged upon them, 'to preach in as many places as they could, but not to form any societies.' They had tried it for more than a year, in a large tract of country, from Newcastle to Berwick-upon-Tweed, and there was scarce any fruit of it remaining. The country was now divided into nine circuits, Ireland being one. He returned to Bristol to open the Kingswood School.

For nearly three months before returning to London he continued his work on his way north as far as Berwick, spending much time in and near Newcastle, then returning to the West Riding of Yorkshire; thence into Lancashire, through Staffordshire, and on to London; and after remaining a few days he set out for another month's journey westward, and into Cornwall. In many places he was gladdened by the obvious signs of improvement in the behaviour of the people; as at Wednesbury, 'where every man, woman, and child behaved in a manner becoming the gospel'; and at Epworth, where 'Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness were no more seen, and cursing and swearing were rarely heard.' The fear of God had spread in an uncommon degree at Grimsby; while in Newcastle and in all the country societies around, he found not only an increase of numbers, but more of the life and power of religion. At other places, however, mob violence was as outrageous as ever, and in some places was truly appalling. Leaving Haworth with his travelling

companions, Mr. Mackford, Mr. Grimshaw,¹ the zealous incumbent, and a devoted lay preacher named Colbeck, he came to Roughlee, a village near Colne, and preached. When he was halfway through his discourse a mob from Colne 'came pouring down the hill like a torrent.' After exchanging a few words with their captain, a deputy constable, to prevent a contest he consented to go with him to a Justice of the Peace ; but he had scarce gone ten yards when one of the crowd struck him with his fist in the face with all his might, and another threw his stick at his head. Here he made a little stand, when another of the ruffians came cursing and swearing in a most shocking manner, and, flourishing his club over Wesley's head, cried out, 'Bring him away.' They were then hurried off to a public-house, where his worship awaited them, who required Wesley to promise he would come to Roughlee no more ; but he replied he would sooner cut off his hand than make such a promise. When he was leaving the house, one of the mob beat him to the ground, and when he rose again, the whole body came about him like lions, and forced him back into the house, from which, however, he escaped. But his companions,

¹ The Rev. Wm. Grimshaw, B.A., was born at Brindle, Lancs., 1708. His early ministry at Todmorden was not marked by any religious earnestness, but a change in his character took place in his twenty-sixth year, and ten years after he found the peace of the Gospel. On removing to Haworth, he began to preach in the neighbouring hamlets. He afterwards joined heartily with the Methodists, who frequently preached in his church, which was the scene of many remarkable services. He was eccentric, but very zealous, preaching from twelve to thirty times in a week. He died in the fifty-fifth year of his age, after rather more than twenty years of exceptionally useful ministerial service.

leaving by another door, were immediately closed in by the mob, who tossed them to and fro with the utmost violence, throwing Mr. Grimshaw down, and casting upon him dirt and mire of every kind. Mackford they dragged by the hair of his head, and inflicted upon him injuries from which he never recovered. Wesley was also subjected to very rough treatment at Bolton ; but no serious results happened to him from it.

Being invited by the minister of Goodshaw to preach in his church, he went thither, read the prayers, and, finding the church would not hold the assembled crowd, he went out and stood on the church wall and preached, afterwards making this reflection: ' I wonder at those who still talk so loud of the indecency of field-preaching. The highest indecency is in St. Paul's Church, when a considerable part of the congregation are asleep, or talking, or looking about, not minding a word the preacher says. On the other hand, there is the highest decency in a churchyard or field, when the whole congregation behave and look as if they saw the Judge of all, and heard Him speaking from heaven.'

He returned to London, having received the following letter from his friend Whitefield, who had lately arrived from America, after an absence of nearly four years:—

' London, September 1, 1748.

' REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

' My not meeting you in London has been a disappointment to me. What have you thought about an union? I am afraid an external one is impracticable. I find, by your sermons, that we differ in principles more than

I thought ; and I believe we are upon two different plans. My attachment to America will not permit me to abide very long in England ; consequently, I should but weave a Penelope's web if I formed societies ; and if I should form them, I have not proper assistants to take care of them. I intend therefore to go about preaching the gospel to every creature. You, I suppose, are for settling societies everywhere ; but more of this when we meet. I hope you don't forget to pray for me. You are always remembered by, reverend and dear sir, yours most affectionately in Christ Jesus,

' GEORGE WHITEFIELD.'¹

Having examined the society, and transacted other business, he repaired to Cornwall ; after a month's absence, he returned about the middle of October, and spent the rest of the year in and near London.

The year 1749 was marked by incidents in Wesley's personal history that were of considerable interest both to him and to others. Reference must be made to these events, but to enter minutely into a description of them would divert attention from the main object of these pages. He had designed to visit Rotterdam early in the year, but, being pressed to answer Dr. Middleton's book against the Fathers,² he remained in London, and spent nearly twenty days 'in that unpleasing employment.' About the middle of February he started on a great missionary tour,

¹ *Whitefield's Works*, ii. 370.

² *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church, from the Earliest Ages, through several successive centuries, etc.* By Conyers Middleton, D.D. London, 1749, 4to, pp. 393. For particulars of Wesley's Answer, entitled, *A Letter to the Reverend Doctor Conyers Middleton, Occasioned by his late Free Enquiry*, see Green's *Wesley Bibliography*, No. 121.

and did not return to London until early in August. At Kingswood he gathered together seventeen of his preachers, and read lectures to them daily on Theology, Logic, and the Rules for Action and Utterance, as he used to do to his pupils in Oxford. He also met the children of the four schools—the boys who were boarded in the new school, and the girls in the old; and the day scholars, both boys and girls.

At the beginning of April he started on a journey through Wales, attending his brother's wedding at Garth on the 8th. This interesting occasion is described as 'a solemn day, such as became the dignity of a Christian marriage.' 'Prayer and thanksgiving,' Charles says, 'was our whole employment. We were cheerful without mirth, serious without sadness. A stranger, that intermeddled not with our joy, said, "It looked more like a funeral than a wedding."' But they were all joyful, John more so than any of them. This was a very happy union. Charles continued his missionary labours for some years, his wife occasionally accompanying him. After a time he withdrew from the longer journeys, confining his labours mainly to London and Bristol; preaching with great power and usefulness, and writing his numerous hymns, until his death in 1788. His wife survived him until 1822, dying in great peace, in the ninety-seventh year of her age.

After the wedding, Wesley went forward to Holyhead, and crossed over to Dublin. His first labours, after a fortnight in Dublin, were expended in the southern provinces of Munster and Leinster, where he passed from town to town, preaching to audiences

who eagerly listened to his words. At Limerick, where he stayed between two and three weeks, much good was done. 'The more I converse with this people,' he says, 'the more I am amazed. That God hath wrought a great work is manifest. And yet the main of them, believers and unbelievers, are not able to give a rational account of the plainest principles of religion. It is plain God begins His work at the heart; then the inspiration giveth understanding.' At Rathcormack he was heartily received by the Rev. R. Lloyd, in whose church he preached, many Roman Catholics venturing to the service and forming 'a very serious part of the congregation:' the next day he preached in the church again twice, when 'the hearts of the people seemed to be as melting wax;' and never since his coming to Ireland had he been so much refreshed as in praying for them, and in calling them to accept the 'redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'

At the close of the service word was brought that a storm of riot and violence had broken forth with terrific fury at Cork, whither he was going. His friends, judging it to be undesirable for him to stay there, he, for this time at least, was compelled to yield, and he rode through the city without stopping. The fiendish violence of the mob has no parallel in all the annals of Methodist persecution. The most uproarious and disgraceful scenes were continued for a whole year, during which many of the poor Methodists and their sympathizers were seriously and shamefully injured, their houses wrecked, and much of their property destroyed.¹

¹ See Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i

Wesley's preaching in Ireland was with great power, and many persons were savingly converted from sin to righteousness. His lay helpers had been faithfully ministering to the societies since his previous visit, especially in the two southern provinces. Wherever he went the people seemed to give earnest heed to the preaching. At Portarlington, a town inhabited chiefly by French, he was gladly received by the clergyman. At the close of service in the church he walked to the market-place, the whole congregation following him. Here he preached to a more brilliant company than he had seen anywhere in Ireland, unless in St. Mary's at Dublin; yet all, both high and low, behaved with becoming propriety. On a second visit in a few days he formed a society of sixty persons, and on a third visit two days later he preached again, and scarce knew how to leave off, all the people seeming to be so deeply affected. The society was increased to above one hundred members. But while he rejoiced, he reminded himself of the parable of the seed.

Riding two miles further on, he preached, and, though it rained the whole time, and he was thoroughly wet before he had done, the rain driving full in his face, it moved neither hearers nor preacher. It is an impressive picture that presents itself of this delicate, frail-looking gentleman, scrupulously careful respecting his dress and appearance, standing unmoved in pouring rain, bent upon making his appeal to men to forsake sin and be reconciled to God, entirely indifferent to personal convenience, undeterred by rudeness of men or by unpropitious skies.

On returning to Dublin, he preached on the

Green, morning and evening, to larger congregations than he had seen there before. After a stay in Ireland extending over a full quarter of the year, he sailed to Bristol, regulated the society there, and the schools at Kingswood, and returned to London, where he remained three weeks, and then rode forward to the north on a journey which occupied more than two months and a half. He left London for the north at the close of August, reaching Newcastle in about a week. At this time an incident occurred which greatly affected him for a while. At the Orphan House in Newcastle, Grace Murray, a devoted Christian woman, the widow of a sea captain, was engaged in various works. She was exceedingly useful in meeting several of the classes and bands for women, and in visiting the sick in and around the city ; at the same time acting as matron of the Orphan House, which was the home of Wesley and the preachers when they were in Newcastle. Wesley very highly prized her services, and became much attached to her. During a brief illness, she nursed him in the Orphan House, and the attachment ripened into affection. She also nursed John Bennet, one of Wesley's helpers, in an illness of six weeks' duration. Bennet became enamoured of her, and made proposals of marriage to her. Wesley's views of marriage having changed, he also made proposals to her ; but whether before or after Bennet had done so, does not clearly appear. From her own distinct statement, written some time after, it was not till she had 'gone too far with John Bennet to turn back,' that Wesley distinctly and definitely proposed marriage. Certainly both were her suitors at the

same time. One of her friends is reported to have said to Bennet, 'If Grace Murray consult her ambition, she will marry Mr. Wesley ; if she consult her love, she will marry you'—which she finally decided to do. Her language was peculiar. She said to Wesley, 'I love you more than anybody in the world ; but if I don't marry him he will go mad.' Even making allowance for the difficult position in which she was placed, it does not seem possible entirely to exculpate her from a want of decision ; nor is it easy to understand how Wesley could press his suit, when he knew that her affections were, to some degree at least, bestowed on another. But he believed that she was engaged to him first ; he loved her as he had never loved any one but his mother ; and he was thoroughly persuaded that in many ways, all of which he has minutely stated, she was fitted to be of the greatest possible help to him in his work, and so would very much increase his usefulness. This must be regarded as one of his strongest reasons for desiring to marry her. It is only by giving the utmost weight to the reasons adduced by him, that we can understand how he could be more useful than he was, seeing his entire time and all his powers were wholly devoted to the service of God and the welfare of his fellow-men. Charles Wesley and some others were wishful that he should not marry ; and, in order to prevent it, they hastened on the marriage with Bennet, during Wesley's absence in Cumberland, nothing being allowed by him to interfere with his primary work. 'I need add no more,' says Wesley, in an account he gives of the affair, 'than that if I had had more regard for her I loved

than for the work of God, I should now have gone on straight to Newcastle, and not back to Whitehaven. I know this was giving up all ; but I knew God called.' The day before what proved to be the wedding-day, Wesley dedicated to God in fasting and prayer, and found his will more resigned. He preached in the morning at five o'clock in the open air, when 'the darkness and rain were little hindrance either to himself or the congregation.' He also preached in the evening. On the following day, he says, 'I felt no murmuring thought, but deep distress. I accepted the just punishment of my manifold unfaithfulness, and therefore could not complain ; but felt the loss both to me and the people, which I did not expect could ever be repaired.'¹ This day and the following were spent in riding to Leeds ; and on the latter day he was in the saddle from five in the morning till nine at night, saving the brief time spent at meals.

At Leeds he met his brother, Mr. Whitefield, and Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, when there was much weeping, confession, and explanation, with forgiveness and reconciliation. The next day Whitefield and Wesley preached, and on the following day Wesley preached three times. He then set off to Newcastle, giving vent to his sorrow in a most pathetic poem of thirty-one stanzas, which he composed as he rode along. On his way he preached at Birstal and Leeds, when the congregations were so large at both places that, although his voice was stronger than it had been for years, and he spoke with all the strength he had, yet the words did not

¹ *Narrative of a Remarkable Transaction in the Life of John Wesley.*

reach two-thirds of the congregation. He reflects, 'Who would have expected such an inconveniency as this, after we had been twelve years employed in the work? Surely none will now ascribe the number of the hearers to the novelty of field-preaching.'

Returning to Leeds, he rode, at the desire of John Bennet (so little of unfriendly feeling did Wesley harbour), to Rochdale. On entering the town, they found the streets lined on both sides with multitudes of people, shouting, cursing, blaspheming, and gnashing upon them with their teeth. Finding it impracticable to preach 'abroad,' he went into a large room open to the street, and cried aloud, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;' and the Word prevailed; none opposed or interrupted, and a change came over the people. They went on to Bolton in the evening, and had no sooner entered the main street than they discovered that 'the lions of Rochdale were lambs in comparison with those at Bolton.' He says, 'Such rage and bitterness I scarce ever saw before, in any creatures that bore the form of men.' His companions were very rudely dealt with. Perceiving a favourable opportunity, he walked down into the thickest of the crowd that filled the house, and called for a chair. Then 'the winds were hushed, and all was calm and still. My heart was filled with love, my eyes with tears, and my mouth with arguments. They were amazed, they were ashamed, they were melted down, they devoured every word. What a turn was this! O how did God change the counsel of the old Ahithophel into foolishness, and bring all the drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-



JOHN WESLEY AND THE MOB AT BOLTON IN 1749.

The two figures in the foreground are those of an Irish Roman Catholic and a Butcher. In the background may be seen the mob entering from a back room.

breakers, and mere sinners in the place, to hear of His plenteous redemption.' At Wednesbury he was greatly comforted; at Birmingham, not a scoffer, nor a trifler, not even an inattentive person, could he discern. He retired to Kingswood to write, and then to Shoreham, and afterwards to Lewisham, for the same purpose; closing the year in London, where, on one day, he preached four times, and the following day three times, besides holding four meetings.

The Conference of this year was held in London, on November 16. Assistants were appointed to the nine great circuits, and each was instructed to travel with Wesley through all the societies in his circuit. Wesley did not publish the Minutes of this Conference, nor of any subsequent Conference, until 1765; but in the course of this year he published an abstract of the proceedings of the five previous Conferences in two small pamphlets, which were printed in Ireland during his stay there.

The year 1750, the last of the first decade of Wesley's evangelistic labours, differed in nowise from the others in the variety, toilsomeness, and interest of his work. He travelled as before, with the same exposure to rough weather and rougher groups of men. But he braved all, and his indomitable spirit carried him successfully through all his toils, and finally conquered all opposition. Even in Cork, where for a whole year violence and persecution had continued, he succeeded in making a stand and preaching, notwithstanding many threats and many efforts to prevent him.

He spent nearly seven months away from London in his various tours, which began at the end of

February, when, after three weeks in and near Bristol, he went through Wales to Holyhead, and embarked for Dublin. He remained in Ireland from April 7 to July 22, travelling backwards and forwards, mainly in the southern provinces, and finding amidst his labours, and, at times, his physical weakness, abundant encouragement in his work. But, indeed, he was little dependent upon cheering signs. If they were present, they called for joyous thanksgiving; if absent, for renewed and patient exertion.

On leaving Dublin, towards the end of July, he sailed to Bristol, and, after a week's stay, pushed on to Cornwall, where he spent a month, preaching to large assemblies and small, encountering occasional rudeness, but generally receiving a calm and attentive hearing. He then occupied a week in his return to London, preaching at the several places through which he passed. Then, after a fortnight spent in London, he went down to Bristol for a month, returned, and passed the rest of the year at the Foundery. Imperative restrictions of space prevent any further detail of the year's labour. It was of the same heroic, self-devoted character,—the same calm intensity of purpose, the same indifference to external circumstances, and the same concentration of effort in the all-absorbing appeal to the conscience of the nation.

It will have been observed that Wesley occasionally retired to the houses of some of his friends. It was with the object of securing quiet, where he could give undisturbed attention to writing. During the half decade now ended he had published many works of different kinds, and had projected others. In 1746 he commenced his *Lessons for Children*,

which, issued in four parts, comprised nearly four hundred pages, in which 'the most useful portions of Scripture, such as children may most easily understand, and such as it most concerns them to know, are set down in the same order and (generally) the same words as in Holy Scripture.' He wrote and published, in addition to those previously named, eleven pamphlets on religious and practical subjects; ten others being defences of Methodism against her assailants; a fifth extract from his Journal; a *Compendium of Logic*; short Latin and English grammars, and nine Latin reading-books, for use in the school at Kingswood. He also edited and published eleven pamphlets of hymns written by his brother. But his most considerable publications during this period were three volumes of sermons, containing the most carefully expressed statements of his doctrinal views. To these a fourth volume was afterwards added. These four volumes, containing forty-three sermons, formed, together with *Notes on the New Testament*, published subsequently, the standard doctrinal basis of Methodism. But the largest work that he projected, and at this time began to publish, was entitled, *A Christian Library*. It extended to fifty 12mo volumes, and consisted of the choicest pieces of English practical Divinity that he could find. Most of the pieces were abridged from ponderous tomes; and all were divested of every unnecessary word, a work in which he certainly excelled. This was a noble and benevolent undertaking, but too costly to be within the reach of his societies; the price being more than £6. He lost more than £200 by the effort. It might have been

a more successful enterprise had the books been published as separate and independent volumes. This collection of practical Christian teaching has never been estimated as Wesley hoped it would be ; nor as the character of the work and the labour bestowed upon it deserved.

A decade of Wesley's evangelistic work has now, to some extent, been illustrated sufficiently, without presenting the daily details, to make known in what manner he spent these ripened years of his life. The record shows that every hour was carefully and scrupulously bought up and devoted to his one great work—his uninterrupted appeal to the heart and conscience of the people of these islands, and to the conservation of the fruits of his labour. Every morning he held his five-o'clock service, save when travelling required him at that hour, or earlier, to be on the road. At almost every town through which he passed he held at least one service, most frequently in the open air—the number of services held each day depending not on his convenience, but on the possibilities of time and the attendance of the people. If he remained in any place, it was in order to 'regulate' his societies there ; or to make it a centre around which he could itinerate. His time when he was in London was engrossed by public and private services, by benevolent enterprises, by attention to the society, or by retirement for literary purposes. He was never unoccupied. He had long accustomed himself to account for every hour of every day. This had been habitual with him since he began his Pocket Diary in 1723 or 1724. And this astounding monotony of labour was continued without a break, save when

severe illness absolutely forbid ; and the illness must be severe, for what would have silenced other men he broke through with a holy daring, again and again casting off the threatening of disease by more active toil. A cold, a headache, or a weariness was rather a call to effort than a prohibition of it.

Although the previous pages are far from presenting a full and minute account of his daily activities, it is beyond the limits of possibility to present the remainder of his life with even an equal measure of minuteness, though the materials are at hand. It must suffice to glance at each decade in succession, and to say that a second, a third, a fourth, and a fifth decade were filled up by the same unwearying industry, the same undaunted, uninterrupted labour. His evangelistic tours were continued to the last year of his life; his multiplied services, early and late, 'abroad' or 'within,' were not diminished as long as it was possible for him to move from place to place.

A complete itinerary, showing Wesley's journeys for fifty years, is before the writer. There is not a break in the whole series. The number of places visited during one of the years is less than usual ; this was due to the detention of a serious illness. A specimen from each of the remaining four decades is given (1760, 1770, 1780, 1790). All the intermediate years correspond to these. It is an extraordinary, an unparalleled record.¹ But his *Journals*, and the

¹ The nearest approach to Wesley's life in its toilsomeness, duration, usefulness, and evangelistic character is, perhaps, that of Francis Asbury, the premier Bishop of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, whose *Journal* bears a marked resemblance to Wesley's ; and of whom it is recorded that he devoted to the work of the ministry

accumulated material gathered by various writers, must be searched for the details. It is impossible to present them here.

about fifty-five years of his life, forty-five of which were spent in visiting the cities, villages, and wildernesses of North America; during thirty years of which he was the General Superintendent of that widespread and rapidly progressive Church. His *Journal*, extending from 1771 to 1815, was published in three volumes, by Lane and Scott. New York, 1852.

CHAPTER VIII

A SECOND DECADE
OF EVANGELISTIC TOIL

1751-1760

THIS decade was marked by affliction and sorrow. Wesley was not, indeed, subjected to mob violence to the same extent as in previous years ; but trouble arose from other causes, some of them personal to himself, and others related to the work he had in hand. In the years 1753 and 1754 he suffered much from severe illness. At times his physical prostration was so great that it seemed unlikely he could long continue his work ; yet again and again he summoned sufficient strength to preach, though fever and pain and hæmorrhage supervened. During one of his attacks he was brought very low, when, as he writes, ' not knowing how it might please God to dispose of me, and to prevent vile panegyric,' he wrote the following epitaph, ordering that this, if any, inscription should be placed on his tombstone :

Here lieth the Body
of
JOHN WESLEY,
A Brand plucked out of the burning ;
Who died of a Consumption in the Fifty-first Year
of his Age,
not leaving, after his Debts are paid,
Ten Pounds behind him :
Praying,
God be merciful to me, an unprofitable Servant !

Early in the following year he retired to Bristol to take the benefit of the Hot Wells. Here he began to write *Notes on the New Testament* ; ' a work,' he says, ' which I should scarce ever have attempted, had I not been so ill as not to be able to travel or preach, and yet so well as to be able to read and write. I now went on in a regular method, rising at my hour [four o'clock] and writing from five to nine at night ; except the time of riding, half an hour for each meal, and the hour between five and six in the evening.' Preaching was wholly intermitted for four months. Regaining a little strength, he returned to London, and spent some weeks at Paddington in writing, only going to town on Saturday evening and leaving again on Monday morning. Early in June, at the Foundery he preached, which he had not done in the evening for a long time, although his voice and strength were still impaired. In July he was able to resume his work in the open air after an interval of nine months ; but he was not able fully to renew his journeys until April of the following year. After this no prolonged interruption occurred, and he soon began to extend his visits to a much larger

number of places than at any previous time, and this continued to the last year of his life.

In his own private affairs the most considerable incident was his marriage to Mrs. Vazeille, which took place on February 19, 1751.¹ Nine or ten days previously he was crossing London Bridge when his foot slipped ; his ankle, striking a stone, was seriously injured and one of his legs was severely sprained ; yet he preached, and attempted to do so again in the evening, but the pain was too great. He spent the week at the house of his future wife, ' partly in prayer, reading, and conversation, and partly in writing a *Hebrew Grammar* and finishing the *Lessons for Children.*' On the following Sunday he preached at the Foundery kneeling, and the next day, or the day afterwards, was married. He preached again once or thrice, still kneeling. In a fortnight, being able to ride, though not to walk, he set out alone for Bristol, where he held a conference with his preachers, after which he returned to London, and six days later started on his northern journey, writing, 'I cannot understand, how a Methodist preacher can answer it to God, to preach one sermon, or travel one day less, in a married, than in a single state. In this respect surely "it remaineth, that they who have wives be as though they had none."' Scarcely one of his friends

¹ He wrote, 'Having received a full answer from Mr. Perronet, I was clearly convinced that I ought to marry. For many years I remained single, because I believed I should be more useful in a single, than in a married state. And I praise God who enabled me so to do. I now as fully believed, that in my present circumstances, I might be more useful in a married state ; into which, upon this clear conviction, and by the advice of my friends, I entered a few days after.' But he has not stated in detail, as in the case of Mrs. Murray, in what way he believed his usefulness would be increased.

at the time, and none of his biographers more recently, could say a word in favour of the marriage. Edward Perronet stands alone as having given his approval of it. Charles Wesley and others, who were much interested in his welfare, deeply deplored it. As far as can be learned he derived little or no help from Mrs. Wesley ; while she did much to impair his comfort, subjecting him to many indignities, and finally leaving him. Wesley must have been greatly disappointed in his marriage ; and whatever may be said in exculpation of Mrs. Wesley's conduct, on the ground of the very peculiar circumstances in which she was placed, it is clear that, instead of being a source of help and happiness to him, she was the occasion of much sorrow and personal distress. Tyerman has given numerous details of the affair, and has judged it in his usual impulsive style.

One great trouble to him arose from the disturbance of several of his societies by the diffusion amongst them of erroneous, or foolish and divisive views, as by the Predestinarians in Wednesbury and the Mystics and Antinomians in Birmingham, the spread of Antinomian and Calvinistic doctrines in Ireland, and other similar difficulties. These he sought to counteract by careful private teaching wherever he met with them ; and he wrote pamphlets for distribution in his absence. The withdrawal of John Bennet from the ranks of his helpers, and especially the prejudicial influence of James Wheatley, another helper, in Ireland, and his subsequent moral defection in Wiltshire and Norwich, with disastrous effects on the society, caused Wesley the keenest pain, and

involved him in much unprofitable labour ; while it wrought havoc amongst a large number of persons whom Wheatley had drawn around him. All this Wesley combated with the utmost earnestness and courage, and finally with considerable success. But the whole threw threatening clouds for years over the work, and of painfulness and sorrow over Wesley and his fellow-evangelists. Wheatley was the first helper on whom Wesley exercised the extreme discipline of expulsion.

But a deeper trouble arose from a current of anti-church feeling, which at times ran with considerable strength. Some of Wesley's helpers and many of his people had never held any vital connection with the Church of England. Wesley strove to unite them to it, and endeavoured to persuade—sometimes almost to compel—them to attend the services and the sacraments in their parish churches, always setting the example of attendance, and refusing himself to conduct services in 'church hours.' But the treatment meted out to them by some of the clergy was not encouraging ; in not a few instances it was positively repellant. It was not, therefore, surprising that they should desire that the sacraments might be administered to them by the men through whom they had received spiritual benefit. Wesley's moderation in dealing with them contrasted with his brother's more summary and uncompromising spirit. The controversy at times waxed warm, and was prolonged through many years. It was debated again and again in the Conferences, when Wesley was generally able to secure unanimity in the resolve not to separate from the Church. Charles Wesley was first a Churchman, then a

Methodist. Wesley, though firm to the end in his attachment to the Church, set 'the work of God' primarily before him. Charles said it was not lawful to separate: John said it was not expedient; but he also said, 'Church or no Church, I must save souls.' This diversity of view, together with other disturbing circumstances, caused a measure of estrangement between the brothers during this decade. But it did not last long. The old brotherly love flamed up again in spite of all. But the itinerant work and the care of the societies throughout the country generally, rested almost exclusively upon the shoulders of Wesley, for Charles, partly driven off by a spirit with which he could not sympathize, and partly drawn away by the attractiveness of his happy home life, gradually withdrew from the itinerancy, and his labours after a time were mainly restricted to London and Bristol.

Wesley was also troubled by controversialists, some of whom he could not ignore, as he did most of his assailants. He replied to Bishop Lavington in three separate publications, though his lordship's production little deserved an answer. He also wrote his *Predestination Calmly Considered*, to correct the growth of error in Ireland, as well as several other controversial pieces. This was to him 'heavy work,' such as he 'should never choose, but it must be done.' The vileness of a filthy Press that attacked Methodism with the bitterest venom found its climax in the corrupt writings of Foote, whose foulest production, *The Minor: A Comedy*, was exhibited to depraved and sympathizing audiences at the Haymarket for several months.

Wesley's more serious works were a volume

entitled *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, in answer to Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, the most complete theological treatise that he published; *A Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion*, for the special use of his young preachers; forty-nine volumes of the *Christian Library*; *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, with a revised translation of the text; *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England*; and a *Treatise on Electricity*. These, with many other minor publications, including a hymn-book for the use of his people—*Hymns and Spiritual Songs*—and various pamphlets of hymns, show with how much diligence and care his time that was not spent in direct evangelistic work was sacredly redeemed.

But though the decade was characterized by many troublous circumstances, it was not all dark. The work progressed, the sphere of Wesley's activity was extended: he paid four visits to Scotland, the first in 1751; he also preached in many places in England not previously visited. His helpers increased in number; sixty-five additional itinerants were enrolled, so that at the close of the decade ninety were engaged, and many 'local' helpers. More than fifty chapels, or preaching-houses, were occupied. Further signs of spiritual awaking presented themselves; Wesley wrote, 'In the beginning of the year 1760 there was a great revival of the work of God in Yorkshire.' This was the presage of a very great work throughout the kingdom. The secular affairs of the societies, especially those connected with his publishing enterprises, were committed to stewards, leaving Wesley more free for his spiritual labour. Several more of the clergy—Berridge, Milner, and others—sympathized

with the Methodist work, and imitated it. His old friend Whitefield was 'all love and tenderness.' But a richer source of help, of blessing, and of joy was at hand. Wesley writes, 'On Sunday, March 13, 1757, finding myself weak at Snowsfields, I prayed (if He saw good) that God would send me help at the chapel [in West Street]; and I had it. A clergyman whom I never saw before, came and offered me his assistance; and as soon as I had done preaching Mr. Fletcher came, who had just then been ordained priest, and hastened to the chapel on purpose to assist, as he supposed me to be alone.'

The coming of Fletcher (William de la Fléchère, of Nyon, in Switzerland) to Wesley's help is too interesting and important an event in this history to be hastily passed over. As we have seen, Charles Wesley had relaxed his itinerant labours, and before the end of the decade they had become limited to London and Bristol. Happily on all hands helpers were springing up, or the work could not have advanced, nor could Wesley have been at liberty to pursue his evangelistic tours through the country. Fletcher did not enter Wesley's corps of itinerants, but he became an invaluable counsellor and friend; and, by his occasional visits to some of the societies, brought to bear upon them the influence of his saintly character and spiritual ministry. His able and ready pen was freely used, and with singular power, in rebutting Wesley's opponents, and in defending his teaching and his work, while his gracious, lofty, and seraphic spirit was a hallowed inspiration and comfort.

Wesley's itinerant labours through the decade are

illustrated in the itinerary for the last year of the period, which is given on the following pages, though even this does not supply the names of all the places at which in his journeys he stopped to preach. The barriers of prejudice were in some instances beginning to yield, though as yet only a few of the churches were open to him. Near the close of the decade he was, however, greatly cheered by joining with his friend Berridge in some very remarkable services in Everton Church.

The gradually enlarging Conferences were seasons of much blessing, and were marked by unanimity, love, and the control of a supreme resolve to carry on the work, in spite of all hardships—and they were many—and not to separate from the Church.

In the following Itineraries, taken mainly from his Journals, the names of the towns through which he passed and only stopped to preach are in italics. Several names are omitted through lack of space.

WESLEY'S ITINERARY

The names of the towns through which he passed on his

Day.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.
1	Norwich	London	London	Dublin	Moirá	Athlone
2	"	"	"	"	Lisburn	"
3	"	"	Towcester	"	"	"
4	<i>Fornet</i> Kenninghall	"	<i>Birmingh'm</i> Wednesb'ry	"	<i>Cumber</i> Newtown	"
5	Colchester	"	"	"	Belfast	"
6	Langham	"	"	"	Carrickf'rg's	Ahaskra
7	London	"	Dudley	"	Larne	"
8	"	"	Wolver- hampton	"	<i>Ballymena</i> Garvah	Athlone
9	"	"	Burslem	"	"	<i>Abidarrig</i> Langford[ve
10	"	"	<i>Biddulph</i> Stockport	"	"	<i>Drumersna-</i> Carrick-on-
11	"	"	<i>Mottram</i> Leeds	"	"	Shannon
12	"	<i>Deptford</i> Welling	"	"	<i>Ballymena</i> Moirá	"
13	"	London	Manchester	"	<i>Cootehill</i> Belturbet	"
14	"	"	"	"	<i>Swadlinbar</i> Sligo	Tyrrel's Pass
15	"	"	"	"	"	"
16	"	"	Stockport	"	"	Edinderry
17	"	Windmill- Hill	"	"	"	"
18	"	London	"	"	"	<i>Portarlígt'n</i> Mount Mel-
19	"	"	Liverpool	"	Castlebar	" [lick
20	"	"	"	"	"	"
21	"	"	"	Rosmead	"	Tullamore
22	"	"	"	"	Newport	Coolylough
23	"	"	"	Newry	"	"
24	Brentford	"	<i>Warrington</i> Chester	"	"	<i>Cloughan</i> Drum'sn've
25	London	"	Mold	"	"	Sligo
26	"	"	Little Lee	"	"	"
27	"	"	Liverpool	"	"	"
28	"	"	"	<i>Rathfriland</i> Terryhugan	Hollymount	"
29	"	"	"	"	Aghrim	" [agh
30	"	"	leaves for Dublin	"	"	<i>Tubbercurr-</i> Castlebar
31	"	"	"	"	"	"

FOR 1760

way, and at which he preached, are in italics.

July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Day.
Aghrim	Cork	<i>Shept'n-Malt</i> Middlesey	<i>Halberton</i> Tiverton <i>Maiden-D'n</i> <i>Taunton</i> <i>Bridgewater</i>	Bristol	Canterbury	1
<i>Eyrecourt</i> Birr	"	Tiverton	Baderipp <i>Shept'n-Malt</i> Bristol	"	"	2
"	"	Launceston	"	Bath <i>Bradford</i>	Dover	3
Limerick	"	"	"	Frome	"	4
"	"	Camelford	"	Salisbury	"	5
"	"	Trewalder	"	"	London	6
"	Kinsale	Port Isaac <i>St. Colomb</i>	"	<i>Andover</i> <i>Whitchurch</i> Basingstoke	"	7
<i>Killiheen</i> Balligarene	Bandon	St. Agnes	"	London	"	8
"	"	"	"	"	"	9
"	Cork	St. Ives	"	"	"	10
Clare	"	"	"	"	"	11
Ennis	"	"	Kingswood	"	"	12
<i>Clare</i> Limerick	"	"	"	"	"	13
"	"	Zennor <i>Madron</i>	visited the country societies	"	"	14
"	"	St. Just	"	"	"	15
Newmarket	"	"	"	"	"	16
Limerick	"	<i>Penzance</i> Newlyn <i>Penhale</i>	Bristol	"	"	17
"	Clonmell	Helstone	"	"	"	18
"	Kilkenny	Illogan	"	"	"	19
"	Dublin	Redruth	"	"	Snowsfields	20
<i>Shronill</i> Waterford	"	Gwennap Penryn	"	"	London	21
"	"	"	Pensford	"	"	22
"	"	"	<i>Knowle</i> Bristol	"	"	23
"	leaves for Chester	"	"	"	"	24
Clonmell	"	"	"	"	"	25
"	Parkgate <i>Whitchurch</i>	<i>Liskeard</i> Saltash	"	"	"	26
"	Broadwater <i>Worcester</i>	Plymouth Dock	"	"	"	27
"	Bristol	"	"	"	"	28
"	"	<i>Mary Week</i> Millhouse	"	"	"	29
"	"	Collumpton	"	"	"	30
Bandon	"	"	"	"	"	31

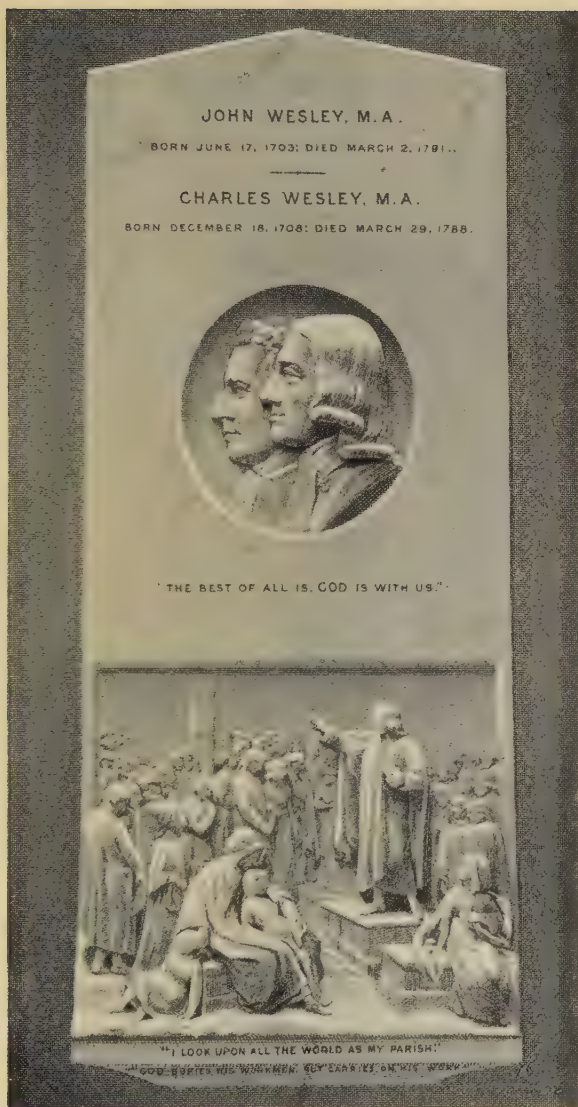
CHAPTER IX

A THIRD DECADE
OF EVANGELISTIC TOIL

1761-1770

THE third decade presents features of a mingled character, several of them being of great interest. Signs of revival and extension appeared in many parts of the country. 'In the beginning of the year 1760,' Wesley wrote, 'there was a great revival of the work of God in Yorkshire. . . . Here began that glorious work of sanctification which had been nearly at a stand for twenty years. But from time to time it spread, first through various parts of Yorkshire, afterwards in London, then through most parts of England; next through Dublin, Limerick, and all the south and west of Ireland. And wherever the work of sanctification increased, the whole work of God increased in all its branches. Many were convinced of sin, many justified, many backsliders healed. So it was in the London Society in particular. In February, 1761, it contained upwards of two thousand three hundred members; in 1763, above two thousand eight hundred.'¹ This expansion of

¹ *Works*, xiii. 314.



John Adams-Acton, Sculp.]

THE WESLEY MONUMENT IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

the work was observable, not only in and around London, but in most parts of England and Ireland, and a similar testimony was borne in 1764.

Wesley dwells much on 'this work of sanctification,' which he defines more accurately as '*entire* sanctification,' in harmony with 1 Thess. v. 23: 'The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly.' This is the 'perfect love,' or 'Christian perfection,' which he strenuously and constantly urged all his societies to seek. 'By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, ruling all the tempers, words, and actions; the whole heart and the whole life.' This was no higher attainment than he had long ago been taught, by his early 'oracle' Law—from whom he both borrowed the phrase and learned how great was the possible spiritual privilege of man under the gospel of Jesus Christ. But a peculiarity of Wesley's teaching was that 'this perfection is always wrought in the soul by faith, by a simple act of faith; consequently in an instant.' But he says, 'I believe in a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant. As to the time,' he adds, 'I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before death. I believe it is usually many years after justification; but that it *may be* within five years or five months after it.'¹ This was associated with an entire devotion of the heart and life to God, so as to 'rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks.' 'The loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength, and the loving all men

¹ *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 210.

as Christ loved us, is, and ever was, the sum of what I deliver as pure and undefiled religion.' While this entire dedication to God, and the happy experience of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, raised many of the early Methodists to saintliness of character, many of the less wary were carried away by a perversion of the teaching into a wildness of enthusiasm that for many years did much to hamper Wesley in his labours, and in several places to arrest the progress of the work. So that, looking back at the close of the year 1762, he could not but be thankful for a year of uncommon blessings, and yet he had had 'more care and trouble in six months than in several years preceding'!

Fletcher wrote to Charles Wesley at this time: 'Many of our brethren are overshooting sober Christianity in London. Oh that I could stand in the gap! Oh that I could, by sacrificing myself, shut this immense abyss of enthusiasm which opens its mouth among us! The corruption of the best things is always the worst of corruptions.'¹

The names of George Bell and Thomas Maxfield stand unhappily associated with this defection; and yet it was to the hands of the latter that the London Society was to a large extent committed. He left Wesley in 1763, drawing away a number who sympathized with his extravagances.

Charles Wesley and Whitefield (who was now in England) were both in ill-health, and the burden on Wesley was prodigious. Happily his health was thoroughly re-established, and he was able to undertake extraordinary labours. At one time he wrote,

¹ Letter, *Methodist Magazine*, 1795, p. 49.

‘Three days in a week I can preach thrice a day without hurting myself ; but I had now far exceeded this, besides meeting classes and exhorting the societies.’ At a subsequent period he wrote, ‘This and the three following days I preached at as many places as I could, though I was at first in doubt whether I could preach eight days, mostly in the open air, three or four times a day. But my strength was as my work. I hardly felt any weariness first or last.’

In the extremely severe winter of 1763, Wesley distributed ‘pease pottage and barley broth’ at the Foundery, and made a collection of £100 to meet the necessities of the starving and destitute poor. In the following year the Foundery was repaired and enlarged.

In the year 1764 Wesley addressed a letter to about fifty evangelical clergymen, with a view to promote a friendly union amongst them. ‘The great point I now laboured for,’ he writes, ‘was a good understanding with all our brethren of the clergy, who are heartily engaged in propagating vital religion.’ Three only of the fifty responded. But at the Conference of that year, John Pawson, who was present, says, ‘Twelve of those gentlemen attended our Conference in Bristol, in order to prevail with Mr. Wesley to withdraw the preachers from every parish where there was an awakened minister ; and Mr. Charles Wesley honestly told us, that if he was a settled minister in any particular place, we should not preach there. To whom Mr. Hampson [one of the assistants] replied, “I would preach there, and never ask your leave, and

should have as good a right to do so as you would have."'¹

An unhappy press controversy also arose about this time from the publication of eleven letters written by Hervey, and published after his death, in reply to some strictures passed by Wesley on the Calvinistic views expressed in Hervey's *Theron and Aspasia*. Wesley's part in the strife was to publish *A Treatise on Justification, extracted from Mr. John Goodwin; with a Preface wherein all that is material in Letters just published under the name of the Rev. Mr. Hervey is answered*. The controversy was embittered by some who took part in it; and Tyerman thinks that Wesley's work in Scotland was hindered by it for twenty years, and that it was the root of a much more important controversy that dated from the end of this decade.

At the Conference of 1766, when many important matters were considered, the question was asked, 'Are we Dissenters?' and in reply it was said, 'A. We are irregular—(1) by calling sinners to repentance in all places; (2) by using extemporary prayer. Yet we are not Dissenters in the only sense which the law acknowledges: namely, persons who believe it is sinful to attend the Church. For we do attend it at all opportunities. We will not, dare not, separate from the Church for the reasons given several years ago. . . . And as we are not Dissenters now, so we will do nothing willingly which tends to a separation from it. Therefore let every assistant immediately so order his circuit that no preacher may be hindered from attending the church more

¹ Pawson's *Affectionate Address*, 1795, p. 11, quoted by Tyerman.

than two Sundays in the month.' It was also affirmed that the services were public worship *in a sense*; but not such as would supersede the Church service. This presupposed public prayer. If the services had been intended to be used instead of the Church service, they would be essentially defective.

Wesley entered into a full explanation of his position in reply to the question, 'What *power* is this which you exercise over all the Methodists in Great Britain and Ireland?' He also dwelt on the condition of the societies, and gave many explicit and valuable counsels to the preachers.

From a letter addressed by Charles Wesley to his wife, and dated August 21, 1766, the following interesting extract may be made. 'Last night my brother came. This morning we spent two blessed hours with G. Whitefield. The threefold cord we trust will never more be broken. On Tuesday next my brother is to preach in Lady Huntingdon's chapel at Bath. That and all her chapels (not to say, as I might, herself also) are now put into the hands of us three.' This indicates a pleasing reunion, and that the brothers were welcomed whenever they could preach in her ladyship's chapels. All this was very gratifying; but subsequent Calvinistic controversies led to the closing of the doors against the Wesleys, about the time of Whitefield's death.

In 1769 he paid his last visit to America. He died on his knees the following year (September 30, 1770), a martyr to excessive labour in the holiest and most blessed service.

Two important steps were taken at the Conference of 1769. One is explained in the following entry:

'We have a pressing call from our brethren at New York (who have built a preaching house) to come over and help them. Who is willing to go? A. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor.' Further, as a token of brotherly love to the little society that had been formed in New York, the members of the Conference made a collection of £70 amongst themselves, to pay for the passage of the brethren and to aid the society across the water. Thus was begun a work the issues of which are to be seen to-day in the largest of the transatlantic Churches.

Another important step was the preparation of a scheme for the perpetuation of Methodism in the event of Wesley's death.

At the Conference held in the last year of the decade it was shown that the number of Methodist circuits had increased to fifty, including America, the itinerant preachers to one hundred and fifty, and the members of the societies to twenty-nine thousand. In reply to the question, 'What can be done to revive the work of God where it is decayed?' After several suggestions, it is next observed, 'We said in 1744, "We have leaned too much towards Calvinism,"' and it was asked, 'Wherein?' The answer to that question gave rise to a bitter and prolonged controversy, as will appear subsequently.

During these years the Press, in its numerous attacks upon Methodism, was very virulent, and not unfrequently coarse. A few were more serious, to which Wesley replied. He made considerable use of the Press for his own purposes, and some of his publications were the product of much labour.

Amongst them the chief were : *An Explanatory Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3 vols., 4to ; *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation, or A Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, first issued in two volumes, then expanded to three and afterwards to five volumes ; *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, a work of much value, as showing Wesley's mature and carefully expressed views on this subject ; a volume of *Advices on Health*, extracted from Dr. Tissot ; also several parts of his *Journal*, many hymn-books, and a considerable number of pamphlets of various kinds and some sermons. Throughout the entire decade Wesley laboured with the utmost assiduity, not relaxing his labour for a single day, or wasting a single hour of the time. Through difficulties and discouragements he held on his way ; even the clouds that gathered around him at times could not hide from his view the clear indications of the Divine blessing upon his labours ; and in spite of all the great work progressed.

WESLEY'S ITINERARY

The names of the towns through which he passed on his

Day.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.
1	London	London	London	Chester	Aberdeen	
2	"	"	"	"	"	
3	"	"	"	Liverpool	"	
4	"	"	"	"	"	
5	"	"	Newbury	"	"	
6	"	"	Bristol	Wigan Bolton	"	Newcastle and neighbour- hood
7	"	"	"	"	Montrose Arbroath	
8	"	Wands- worth	"	"	"	
9	"	London	"	Ambleside	Dundee	
10	"	"	"	Whitehaven	"	
11	"	"	"	"	Edinburgh	Durham
12	"	"	Stroud	Cocker- mouth	"	Yarm
13	"	"	Painswick Tewkesbury	Carlisle	"	Halsey Thirsk
14	"	"	Upton Worcester	Longtown	"	Potto Hutton
15	"	"	Evesham Broadmars- ton	Dumfries	"	Whitby
16	"	"	"	Lesmaha- gow	"	"
17	"	"	Birmingham	Glasgow	Musselboro' Dunbar	" [Bay Robin Hood's Scarbro']
18	"	"	Bromwich Wednesb'y	"	Berwick	
19	"	"	Stourbridge Dudley	"	Alnwick	"
20	"	"	Wednesbury	Edinburgh	"	Bridlington Hull
21	Took a little journey into Bedford- shire	Lewisham	Bilston Wolver- hampton	Perth	Morpeth Newcastle	Beverley
22		London		"	"	York
23		"		Scone	Sunderland	"
24		"	Through Stafford- shire and Cheshire to	Perth	"	"
25		"		Dunkeld Dalwhinny	"	Tadcaster Pateley Bridge
26		"		Inverness Fort George	North Biddick	Otley
27		"		Inverness	Gateshead Newcastle	Yeadon
28		"	Manchester	"		Hoohole
29			Rochdale	"	Through Weardale, Teesdale, Swaledale	Heptonstall Colne
30	Lambeth		"	Narvin Keith		Keighley
31	"		Chester			

FOR 1770

way, and at which he preached, are in italics.

July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Day.
Haworth	N'thampton	Carn Brea	Bristol	Yarmouth	London	1
Bingley	St. Alban's	Gwennap	and around	"	"	2
Bradford	"	Mevagissey	"	"	Chatham	3
		<i>St. Austell</i>				
Halifax	London	Medros	"	Norwich	Canterbury	4
Daw Green	"	Plymouth	"	"	Dover	5
"	"	Collumpton	"	"	"	6
"	"	Taunton	"	"	<i>Faversham</i> Chatham	7
<i>Birstal</i>		<i>Lympsham</i>	<i>Pensford</i>			
Leeds	"	Bristol	<i>Shepton Mallet</i> Wincanton	Lakenheath		8
Woodhouse	"	"	<i>Shaftesbury</i>	<i>Bury</i>		9
Harewood	"	"	Salisbury	Braintree		10
<i>Doncaster</i>			Ford'gb'dge	London		
Finningley	"	Frome	<i>Winchester</i>			11
Epworth	"	Bristol	Portsmouth	"		12
<i>Newton</i>			"	Lewisham		
Horncastle	Bristol	"	London	"	Blank in Journal	13
Louth	"	"	"	"		14
Barrow	"	"	Walling- ford	"		15
<i>Awkborough</i>			Witney	London		16
Swinefleet	"	Kingswood and Bristol				
Thorne	"	"	"	"		17
Crowle	"	"	High Wy- combe	"		18
"	"	"	"	"	{ <i>Dorking</i> <i>Reigate</i>	19
Epworth	Charlton	"	London	"	"	20
"	<i>Tiverton</i>	"	"	"	London	21
<i>Misterton</i>	Launceston	"				
Haxey	Camelford	"	Whittlebury	"	"	22
<i>Doncaster</i>			<i>Towcester</i>			
Rotherham	Port Isaac	"	Weedon	Greenwich	"	23
			<i>Horlston</i>			
Sheffield	Redruth	"	N'th'mpt'n	London	"	24
"			<i>Haddon</i>			
<i>Crich</i>	St. Ives	"	N'th'mpt'n	"	"	25
Derby	"	"	Bedford	"	"	26
<i>Burton</i>						
Ashby	St. Just	"	{ <i>Hertford</i>	"	"	27
<i>Castle Don.</i>	<i>Newlyn</i>		{ London	"	"	
Nottingham	Goldsithney	"	"	"	"	28
<i>Sandiacre</i>						
Nottingham	St. John's	"	Colchester	"	"	29
<i>Bingham</i>						
Houghton	Falmouth	"	Norwich	"	"	30
Markfield	Treworkey	"	"	"	"	31

CHAPTER X

A FOURTH DECADE OF EVANGELISTIC LABOUR

1771-1780

IN entering upon another decade of Wesley's evangelistic labours, it may again be said that it is impossible to chronicle the innumerable interesting incidents which occurred in the ceaseless, but gracious, monotony of hallowed toil that filled these years. Only a few of the more prominent ones, which break its even flow, as rocks the surface of a stream, can be given, and these must be told as briefly as possible.

The last hours of the previous decade had been spent in labour, praise, and thanksgiving. On Christmas Day Wesley began his work with a sermon at the Foundery, at four o'clock in the morning; held service and preached at West Street at nine; met the children in the afternoon at three; preached again at five; and then had a 'comfortable season with the Society'—truly 'a day full of work.' According to established custom, each year was closed with the celebration of the solemn feast-days, according to the design of their institution, a fast-day, and a solemn watch-night; and the new year

was consecrated by a covenant service. Each year, as it opened, found him thus refreshed with holy worship, and ready to enter upon another round of arduous labour.

In the Journal for February, 1771, the following entry occurs: 'For what cause I know not to this day, — [Mrs. Wesley] set out for Newcastle, purposing "never to return." *Non eam reliqui: Non dimisi: Non revocabo.*' It is not necessary to enter here into the details of Mrs. Wesley's conduct. They may be found amply illustrated in many of the *Lives* of Wesley. Her whole demeanour can only be explained on the ground of an overwhelming jealousy. She appears to have been unable to discern the greatness of her opportunity, or to respond to the high calling of a helper to one engaged in a supremely lofty work. Wesley was disappointed in the expectation that his usefulness would be augmented by the marriage; but, though the surface of his comfort was ruffled, he did not allow his labours to be interrupted.

In the course of this year, a zealous and devoted lady—Miss Bosanquet, of Leytonstone, afterwards Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley—wrote to Wesley respecting her engaging in preaching services. He replied in the following letter, which illustrates his views of Methodism at the time:

' Londonderry, June 13, 1771.

' MY DEAR SISTER,

' I think the strength of the cause rests there,—on your having an *extraordinary* call. So, I am persuaded, has every one of our lay preachers; otherwise, I could not countenance his preaching at all. It is plain to me, that the

whole work of God termed Methodism is an extraordinary dispensation of His providence. Therefore, I do not wonder if several things occur therein, which do not fall under the ordinary rules of discipline. St. Paul's ordinary rule was, "I permit not a woman to speak in the congregation." Yet, in extraordinary cases, he made a few exceptions; at Corinth in particular.

'I am, my dear sister, your affectionate brother,
'JOHN WESLEY.'

At the Conference of 1770, attention was called to certain measures deemed to be needful for the reviving of the work of God. Several advices were given, one of them being, 'Take heed to your doctrine. We said in 1744, "We have leaned too much toward Calvinism. Wherein?"' The answers to this question were made the occasion of a bitter and prolonged controversy, extending through the whole of the decade. Fletcher undertook the defence of his friend, and one of the most important results of the conflict was the publication of his trenchant and invaluable *Checks to Antinomianism*.¹ By these, and by many pamphlets written on his behalf, Wesley was spared the necessity of taking more than a small share in the strife, and he was enabled, therefore, to give himself unreservedly to his evangelistic work. This he did to such an extent that, notwithstanding his advancing years, he visited more towns, and preached in more places, during this

¹ For full particulars of this painful conflict, see Stevens' *History of Methodism*, bk. v. ch. ii. In Tegg's edition of this work, 1864, a bibliography is given of no fewer than forty-eight publications issued by the combatants. Wesley wrote only *A Defence of the 'Minute,'* for private circulation, and two replies to assaults upon his doctrinal teaching made by Sir Richard Hill.

decade than in any previous one, as appears from the Itinerary at the end of this chapter. In one year alone he preached in no fewer than two hundred and twenty different places, besides many others that are not named, whither he went in his visits to the country societies. He traversed the country in all weathers through the successive years, save during the time he usually spent in London, where, though he travelled less, he was habitually engrossed in other labours; and he was as scrupulous in the use of his time as in any of the earlier years of his life.

He was not indifferent to the appeals of rest and ease; yet he never lost sight of the spiritual and eternal interests that were involved in his great work. In one of his visits to Newcastle, he wrote: 'I rested here. Lovely place and lovely company! But I believe there is another world; therefore, I must "arise and go hence."' He allowed himself no diminution of labour, whether of travelling, preaching, reading, correspondence, writing for the Press, watching over the growing societies, or promoting philanthropic works. And his strength does not seem to have abated; although in 1773 he made the curious observation, when crossing from Dublin: 'This was the first night I ever lay awake in my life, though I was at ease in body and mind. I believe few can say this: in seventy years I never lost a night's sleep.' In this year he preached in Moorfields to, it was supposed, the largest congregation that had ever assembled there; but his voice was sufficiently strong to enable those that were farthest off to hear perfectly well. At Gwennap it was ascertained by measurement that above thirty-two thousand persons were present;

yet it was found on inquiry that he could be heard 'even to the skirts of the congregation.' 'Perhaps,' he says, 'the first time that a man of seventy had been heard by thirty thousand at once.' Considering his constant recourse to field-preaching, it might readily be supposed that it was easy and welcome work to him; but it seems such was not the case, for he writes: 'To this day field-preaching is a cross to me. But I know my commission, and see no other way of preaching the gospel to every creature.'

In this year one of those gracious spiritual revivals occurred which occasionally brightened the history of Kingswood School, and abundantly repaid him for his toils and sacrifices and painful disappointments on its behalf.

Generally during the Conferences, as he was talking from morning to night, he desired one of the preachers to take the early morning service; but, at two of the Conferences, at least, having many things to say, he preached both mornings and evenings, and he says he found no difference at all; he was no more tired than with his 'usual labour; that is, no more than if I had been sitting still in my study from morning to night.' During his residence in London he frequently visited all the members of the Society at their homes, even though the number ranged between two thousand four hundred and two thousand five hundred.

Few men, if any, ever preached in so many peculiar circumstances. The following case, which occurred about this time, added to many already related, may illustrate this fact. He had promised to preach at six o'clock in the morning to the

prisoners at Whiteley. 'Though the ground was covered with snow, so many people flocked together,' he says, 'that I was constrained to preach in the court of the prison. The snow continued to fall, and the north wind to whistle round us ; but I trust God warmed many hearts.' His days were as full, as at any time, of labour and adventure, of deliverances from danger, and of instances of his great endurance. Many remarkable feats of travelling are also recorded, as on May 9, 1777, when he says he 'went to Malton ; and on the 10th, after travelling between ninety and a hundred miles, I came back to Malton, and, having rested an hour, went on to Scarborough, and preached in the evening. But the flux which I had had for a few days so increased that at first I found it difficult to speak. Yet the longer I spoke the stronger I grew. Is not God a present help ?' He preached on and on, until the evening of the 14th, when he arrived in York. He might well say, 'I would gladly have rested the next day, feeling my breast much out of order. But notice having been given of my preaching at Tadcaster, I set out at nine in the morning. About ten the chaise broke down. I borrowed a horse, but he was none of the easiest. In riding three miles I was so thoroughly electrified, that the pain in my breast was quite cured. I preached in the evening at York ; on Friday took the diligence ; and on Saturday afternoon came to London.'

Being in Congleton, he was suddenly called to Bristol on important business. He set out, remained in Bristol two hours, and returned to fulfil his preaching engagements ; accomplishing a distance

of two hundred and eighty miles in about forty-eight hours, yet no more tired at the end than at the beginning. This was extraordinary, considering his age, and the condition of the roads at the time. These incidents show the resolute spirit of the man, and some of his difficulties. He still continued to extend the area of his evangelistic tours. In 1777 he paid a first visit to the Isle of Man; and, as was usual on his first visits, he carefully recorded his close observations on the appearance of the country.

The nation was now in a very unsettled state, and travelling was dangerous. About this time the post-chaise drivers on one of the public roads combined to deliver their passengers into each other's hands, so that many were robbed and maltreated. Wesley, ever ready to recognize the good providence of God over him, records, 'I have travelled all roads by day and night for these forty years, and never was interrupted yet.'

For two or three years he had suffered from the effects of being thrown upon the pommel of his saddle by a stumbling horse. The matter having become somewhat serious, he underwent a surgical operation, and in a few days was effectually cured. But he suffered a more serious interruption of his work a year later, during one of his visits to Ireland. He was staying at Castle Caulfield, where, he says, 'in the night the rain came plentifully through the thatch, into my lodging-room. But I found no present inconvenience, and was not careful for the morrow.' A week later, however, he wrote: 'I was not very well this morning, but supposed it would soon go off.

In the afternoon, the weather being extremely hot, I lay down on the grass, in Mr. Lark's orchard, at Cock Hill. This I had been accustomed to do for forty years, and never remember to have been hurt by it; only I never lay before on my face, in which posture I fell asleep. I waked a little, and but a little, out of order, and preached with ease to a multitude of people. Afterwards I was a good deal worse.' However, the next day he went on a few miles, and preached standing on a table, and with a strong, sharp wind blowing in his face. He became exceedingly ill, and the symptoms were so serious that the gravest fears were entertained he would not recover. Strength, memory, and mind utterly failed; and for three days he lay more dead than alive. His travelling companion said that his tongue was much swollen, and as black as a coal; that he was convulsed all over; and that for some time his heart did not beat perceptibly, neither was any pulse discernible. As the news of this spread, the anxiety of his friends, and the sorrow of his people, became extremely great, as may very readily be supposed, and prayer was made for him in all parts. Tyerman, who mentions some remarkable circumstances relating to this illness, quotes several letters written at the time, from which the following, addressed by his brother to Joseph Bradford, Wesley's travelling companion, is taken:

'Bristol, June 29, 1775.

'DEAR JOSEPH,

'Be of good cheer. The Lord liveth, and all live to Him. Your last is just arrived, and has cut off all hope of my brother's recovery. If he could hold out till

now, that is, ten days longer, he might recover ; but I dare not allow myself to hope it, till I hear from you again. The people here, and in London, and every place, are swallowed up in sorrow. But sorrow and death will soon be swallowed up in life everlasting. You will be careful of my brother's papers, etc., till you see his executors. God shall reward your fidelity and love. I seem scarce separated from him whom I shall so very soon overtake. We were united in our lives, and in our death not divided. Brethren, pray a very little longer for your loving servant,

‘CHARLES WESLEY.’

‘Thursday evening.

‘Yours of the 20th, I have this moment received. It only confirms my fears. My brother, soon after you wrote, in all probability, entered into the joy of the Lord. Yet write again, and send me the particulars. I have not, and never more shall have, strength for such a journey. The Lord prepare us for a speedy removal to our heavenly country !

‘CHARLES WESLEY.’

But the fears and sorrows of his friends were soon dissipated. With surprising suddenness his illness began to abate, and in less than a week he started for Dublin, where within another week he preached once, and in six days more began his regular course of preaching morning and evening. After preaching at Finstock in the autumn, he wrote, as he had done at several other attractive places in his travels, ‘How many days should I spend here if I was to do my own will ? Not so : I am “to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.” Therefore this is the first day I ever spent here ; and perhaps it may be the last.’ Wesley, now fully alive to his advancing years, was not without reasonable fear that his removal

would be attended by serious consequences to his societies, for several of the preachers were much disaffected on account of their not being permitted to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and many of the congregations were equally displeased because they were not allowed to receive it from the preachers to whom they owed so much and to whom they were much attached, while the clergy, whose ministrations Wesley required his people to attend, often treated them with rudeness and unworthy rebuke. He therefore suggested that, in the event of his death, Fletcher should become his successor, and strenuously urged upon him to comply. This Fletcher resolutely declined ; but, as he was much out of health, he consented to travel with Wesley for a few months. They set out in the spring, and returned at the latter end of the year much improved in health. He was, however, persuaded to remain in London, and his old symptoms returned.

Wesley had already addressed to him the following very remarkable letter :

‘ January, 1773.

‘ DEAR SIR,

‘ What an amazing work has God wrought in these kingdoms, in less than forty years ! And it not only continues, but increases, throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland ; nay, it has lately spread into New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina. But the wise men of the world say, “ When Mr. Wesley drops, then all this is at an end ! ” And so it surely will, unless, before God calls him hence, one is found to stand in his place. For, οὐχ’ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη. Εἰς κοίρανος ἔστω.¹ I see more and

¹ ‘ It is not good that the supreme power should be lodged in many hands : let there be one chief governor.’

more, unless there be one *προεστώς*,¹ the work can never be carried on. The body of the Preachers are not united : nor will any part of them submit to the rest ; so that either there must be one to preside over all, or the work will indeed come to an end.

‘But who is sufficient for these things? qualified to preside both over the Preachers and people? He must be a man of faith and love, and one that has a single eye to the advancement of the kingdom of God. He must have a clear understanding ; a knowledge of men and things, particularly of the Methodist doctrine and discipline ; a ready utterance ; diligence and activity, with a tolerable share of health. There must be added to these, favour with the people, with the Methodists in general. For unless God turn their eyes and their hearts towards him, he will be quite incapable of the work. He must likewise have some degree of learning ; because there are many adversaries, learned as well as unlearned, whose mouths must be stopped. But this cannot be done, unless he be able to meet them on their own ground.

‘But has God provided one so qualified? Who is he? Thou art the man! God has given you a measure of loving faith ; and a single eye to His glory. He has given you some knowledge of men and things ; particularly of the old plan of Methodism. You are blessed with some health, activity, and diligence ; together with a degree of learning. And to all these he has lately added, by a way none could have foreseen, favour both with the Preachers and the whole people. Come out in the name of God! Come to the help of the Lord against the mighty! Come while I am alive and capable of labour!

*Dum superest Lachesi quod torqueat, et pedibus me
Porto meis, nullo dextram subeunte bacillo.*²

¹ ‘A person who presides over the rest.’

² ‘While something yet of health and strength remains,
And yet no staff my faltering step sustains.’

[Juv. Sat. iii. 27-8].

Come while I am able, God assisting, to build you up in faith, to ripen your gifts, and to introduce you to the people. *Nil tanti.* What possible employment can you have, which is of so great importance?

‘But you will naturally say, “I am not equal to the task; I have neither grace nor gifts for such an employment.” You say true; it is certain you have not. And who has? But do you not know Him who is able to give them? perhaps not at once, but rather day by day: as each is, so shall your strength be. “But this implies,” you may say, “a thousand crosses, such as I feel I am not able to bear.” You are not able to bear them now; and they are not now come. Whenever they do come, will He not send them in due number, weight, and measure? And will they not all be for your profit, that you may be a partaker of his holiness?

‘Without conferring, therefore, with flesh and blood, come and strengthen the hands, comfort the heart, and share the labour, of

‘Your affectionate friend and brother,

‘J. WESLEY.’

During this decade Wesley’s work seems to have attained its culmination. His health, notwithstanding the brief interruptions just described, was vigorous, and his labours extraordinary, of which the pages of his *Journal* abound in interesting details. He had outlived violent opposition from the mob, and his influence in the kingdom had become very great, so that his periodical visits were seasons of great interest, and created no little excitement in many parts of the country. The churches, too, were gradually recognizing the greatness of his service in the interests of religion throughout the land. Not only had antagonism to a great degree died down,

but even honours were being conferred upon him. He was made a Burgess of Perth, and the Freedom of Arbroath was granted to him. But what he prized more was the opening of the churches to him, which was not merely a token of respect, but a sign of a great change in the spirit of the clergy, and the first indication of that gracious revival of religion within the Church as a whole which the last century was permitted to witness.

In reviewing a section of his *Journal* just then published, *Lloyd's Evening Post* of January 20, 1772, makes the following reference to his work :

‘ In this interval, between May 27, 1765, and May 5, 1768 [the period embraced by the *Journal*], this zealous and truly laborious missionary of the Methodists, who seems to consider the three kingdoms as his parochial cure, twice traverses the greater part of Ireland and Scotland, from Londonderry to Cork, from Aberdeen to Dumfries, visiting and confirming the Churches, besides making a progress, chiefly on horseback (in many places more than once), through great part of Wales, and almost all the counties in England, from Newcastle to Southampton, from Dover to Penzance. Those who expect to find in this *Journal* only the peculiar tenets of Methodism will be agreeably disappointed, as they are intermixed with such occasional reflections on men and manners, on polite literature, and even on polite places, as prove that the writer is endued with a taste well cultivated both by reading and observation ; and above all with such a benevolence and sweetness of temper, such an enlarged, liberal, and truly Protestant way of thinking towards those who differ from him, as clearly show that *his heart*, at least, is right, and justly entitle him to that candour and forbearance, which, for the honour of our common religion, we are glad to find he now generally receives.’

But, although his work was more and more appreciated by the better class of the people; yet he was never subjected to grosser treatment by the ribald press, the climax of which was the publication in 1778 of seven illustrated pamphlets of the filthiest character, in which satire reached its utmost limits of coarseness, indecency, foulness, and falsehood. Of course, all this class of literature he passed by as he would filth on the wayside.¹

As throwing a sidelight upon part of his work, the following may be quoted: Musing on what he had heard a good man say, 'Once in seven years I burn all my sermons; for it is a shame if I cannot write better sermons now than I could seven years ago,' he affirms:

'Whatever others can do, I really cannot. I cannot write a better sermon on the Good Steward than I did seven years ago; I cannot write a better on the Great Assize than I did twenty years ago; I cannot write a better on the Use of Money than I did near thirty years ago; nay, I know not that I can write a better on the Circumcision of the Heart than I did five and forty years ago. Perhaps, indeed, I may have read five or six hundred books more than I had then, and may know a little more history, or natural philosophy, than I did; but I am not sensible that this has made any essential addition to my knowledge in Divinity. Forty years ago I knew and preached every Christian doctrine which I preach now.'²

On November 1, 1778, he opened the new Chapel in City Road, in and around which so many

¹ For some account of these and other hostile publications, see Green's *Anti-Methodist Literature of the Eighteenth Century*. London. Kelly. 1902.

² *Journal*, September 1, 1778.

pleasing memories have gathered from that day to this. He describes it as perfectly neat, but not fine, and says it contained far more people than the Foundery.¹

The building of City Road Chapel was another step in the consolidation of Methodism, and a direct provision by Wesley for its future permanence. It cannot be denied that he desired his Societies to be connected with the Church; or that he strove to the utmost of his power to bring them into alliance with it. But, to how great an extent he failed in his endeavour! He was driven to the alternative of 'varying' from the Church order, or entrusting his rescued sheep to the custody of the legally appointed shepherds. Can it be said that their care for the flock warranted him in doing the latter? Were the clergy, beyond a small number, willing or able to take spiritual oversight of them? The history of the century is the answer. All Wesley's societies might have been 'Vestry Societies' had the clergy so willed it. He saw the necessity for making provision for the safety of his people. Their preservation was of far higher consideration to him than the maintenance of Church order. Therefore he erected his buildings, and left them on trusts which ensured, as far as human foresight could ensure it, that only his doctrines, which he believed were the true Church doctrines, should be taught in them.

On Christmas Day in this year he preached at four in the morning, in the new chapel, and read prayers, preached, and administered the Sacrament 'to several

¹ He went to reside in the new house near the chapel on Friday, October 8, 1779.

hundreds of people,' at West Street, at the usual morning service. In the afternoon he preached again in the new chapel, 'filled in every corner;' and in the evening at St. Sepulchre's, one of the largest parish churches in London, but was stronger, he says, after his fourth sermon, than after his first; yet he was in his seventy-sixth year. A similar record is given the following year.

In 1778 Wesley issued the first number of a magazine, which, he says, he had been desired to do for more than forty years. It was entitled *The Arminian Magazine: Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption*. The title sufficiently declares its character and purpose. Its publication was occasioned by the attacks mainly of the *Gospel Magazine*. It afforded Wesley an opportunity of defending the doctrines and work of Methodism. 'If it once begin, I incline to think it will not end but with my life,' said Wesley. It has continued to the present day, but in 1893 and 1904 was much changed in form and character.

In the August of 1776 he was introduced to the curate of South Petherton, who had some time before been under deep religious conviction, which showed itself in a marked change in his pulpit ministrations. Thomas Maxfield, an early lay-preacher, to whom frequent reference has been made, and who was now in orders, when visiting South Petherton, made his acquaintance, and was instrumental in leading him to the happy possession of the Gospel salvation. Having had his attention drawn to Wesley's *Sermons* and *Journals*, and to Fletcher's *Checks*, the curate copied Wesley's methods, preaching in the surrounding

villages, thus giving offence to some of his parishioners, who procured his dismissal from his curacy. He determined to join Wesley, who thus describes their meeting: 'I preached at Taunton, and afterwards went to Kingston. Here I found a clergyman, Dr. Coke [he had recently been elected Doctor of Civil Law], late Gentleman Commoner of Jesus College in Oxford, who came twenty miles on purpose. I had much conversation with him, and an union then began, which I trust shall never end.' The coming of Dr. Coke at this time was most providential, for the health of Fletcher began to show signs of serious failure, and Wesley would soon be in need of the help of a vigorous man. This help Dr. Coke rendered; and he became, if not the founder, certainly the organizer of the Methodist Foreign Missions, to which he devoted his strength and fortune, and finally his life. He died at sea on a missionary voyage, when on his way to India.

An order having been made in the House of Lords in May, 1776, 'That the Commissioners of his Majesty's Excise do write circular letters to all such persons as they have reason to suspect to have plate, as also to those who have not paid regularly the duty on the same,' etc., a copy of the order was sent to Wesley in the following September, together with a letter stating that 'the Commissioners cannot doubt but you have plate for which you have hitherto neglected to make an entry,' etc., and desiring an immediate answer. To which he at once replied:

'SIR,

'I have two silver tea-spoons at London, and two at Bristol. This is all the plate I have at present, and

I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread.

‘I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

‘JOHN WESLEY.’

It was within the limits of this decade that he had a very remarkable preservation from death, which he thus describes :

‘Monday, June 20 [1774].—About nine I set out for Horsley, with Mr. Hopper and Mr. Smith. I took Mrs. Smith, and her two little girls, in the chaise with me. About two miles from the town, just on the brow of the hill, on a sudden both the horses set out, without any visible cause, and flew down the hill, like an arrow out of a bow. In a minute, John fell off the coach-box. The horses then went on full speed, sometimes to the edge of the ditch on the right, sometimes on the left. A cart came up against them; they avoided it as exactly as if the man had been on the box. A narrow bridge was at the foot of the hill. They went directly over the middle of it. They ran up the next hill with the same speed; many persons meeting us, but getting out of the way. Near the top of the hill was a gate, which led into a farmer’s yard. It stood open. They turned short, and ran through it, without touching the gate on one side, or the post on the other. I thought, “However, the gate which is on the other side of the yard, and is shut, will stop them.” But they rushed through it, as if it had been a cobweb, and galloped on through the corn-field. The little girls cried out, “Grandpapa, save us!” I told them, “Nothing will hurt you: do not be afraid;” feeling no more fear or care (blessed be God!) than if I had been sitting in my study. The horses ran on, till they came to the edge of a steep precipice. Just then Mr. Smith, who could not overtake us before, galloped in between. They stopped in a moment. Had they gone on ever so little, he and we must have gone down together! I am persuaded

both evil and good angels had a large share in this transaction. How large we do not know now, but we shall know hereafter.’¹

The following is from the pen of Joseph Benson, for some time head-master of Kingswood School, afterwards of Trevecca College, from which he was dismissed for defending the Arminian views embodied in the minutes of the Conference of 1770, and who was now the senior ‘Helper’ at Edinburgh—one of Methodism’s most distinguished sons. Writing from Scotland, he says :

‘I was constantly with him [Wesley] for a week. I had an opportunity of examining narrowly his spirit and conduct ; and, I assure you, I am more than ever persuaded, he is a *none such*. I know not his fellow, first, for abilities, natural and acquired ; and, secondly, for his incomparable diligence in the application of those abilities to the best of employments. His lively fancy, tenacious memory, clear understanding, ready elocution, manly courage, indefatigable industry, really amaze me. I admire, but wish in vain to imitate, his diligent improvement of every moment of time ; his wonderful exactness even in little things ; the order and regularity wherewith he does and treats everything he takes in hand ; together with his quick dispatch of business, and calm, cheerful serenity of soul. I ought not to omit to mention, what is very manifest to all who know him, his resolution, which no shocks of opposition can shake ; his patience, which no length of trials can weary ; his zeal for the glory of God and the good of man, which no waters of persecution or tribulation have yet been able to quench.

¹ *Journal*. Mrs. Smith was the daughter of Mrs. Wesley. She always treated her step-father with great kindness ; and he was much attached to her and her children.

Happy man! Long hast thou borne the burden and heat of the day, amidst the insults of foes, and the base treachery of seeming friends; but thou shalt rest from thy labours, and thy works shall follow thee!"¹

Writing on his birthday, in 1776, he says, 'I am seventy-three years old, and am far abler to preach than I was at three and twenty;' and he inquires into the natural means which God had used to produce so wonderful an effect. He found them in the continual exercise and change of air, and his travelling above four thousand miles a year; in his constantly rising at four o'clock; his ability to sleep immediately, whenever he needed; his never losing a night's sleep in his life; and in what seem to be rough medicines—two violent fevers and two deep consumptions. He judged them to be of admirable service as causing his flesh to come again, as the flesh of a little child. And he adds, 'lastly, evenness of temper;' 'I *feel*, and *grieve*, but by the grace of God I *fret* at nothing. But still "the help that is done upon earth, He doeth it Himself." And this He doeth in answer to many prayers.'²

Some little time after, his friend and faithful 'Helper,' Mr. Thomas Olivers, author of the well-known hymn, 'The God of Abraham praise'—wrote as follows:—'Mr. Wesley is now an old man, and yet has such a variety and multiplicity of business as few men could manage, even in the prime of life. There are few weeks in which he does not travel two or three hundred miles; preach and exhort in

¹ Quoted by Tyerman from *Methodist Magazine*, 1825, p. 386.

² *Journal*.

public between twenty and thirty times, and often more ; answer thirty or forty letters ; speak with as many persons in private, concerning things of deep importance ; and prepare, either in whole or in part, something for the press. Add to all this, that often, in that short space of time, a variety of tracts on different subjects pass through his hands, particularly as he travels.'

At this time the country was in a state of unrest. 'The nation was steeped in guilt and misery. War was raging on almost every side. Trade was paralysed ; and taxes intolerable.' Great excitement was caused by the Catholic Disabilities Bill. Wesley's patriotic and Protestant spirit moved him to write *A Letter to the Printer of the 'Public Advertiser.'* Occasioned by the late Act passed in favour of Popery. He says, 'Receiving more and more accounts of the increase of popery, I believed it my duty to write a letter concerning it, which was afterwards inserted in the public papers. [It was afterwards published as a broad sheet.] Many were grievously offended ; but I cannot help it : I must follow my own conscience.' By others it was much applauded. Even his bitter antagonist, the *Gospel Magazine*, said it had 'been almost universally approved, and was a production of real merit.'

This decade was further signalized by the publication in 1780 of Wesley's well-known 'large' hymn-book, entitled *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*. This book, with some slight variations, has been in use until the present year [1904]. It was a Wesley hymn-book ; all the hymns but ten were from the pens of the Wesley family.

Much care and labour were expended in the collection and revision of its contents.¹

This, the fourth, and most active, decade of Wesley's evangelistic toil, now drew near to a close. The work had advanced with steady steps, so that while at the beginning of it there were 28,263 members in the Societies, and 121 preachers in Great Britain, at the close there were 170 preachers and 43,830 members. In 1769, the first preachers, Boardman and Pilmoor, went to America, where Methodism had been already introduced by a few zealous emigrants. In 1780 there were 42 preachers, and the number of enrolled members was 8504. The total number of members in this country and America had therefore reached to 52,334, and of preachers to 212.

This is a record of astonishing devotion and toil on the part of England's great Evangelist, a record of unflinching fidelity and of concentrated effort to fulfil what he had for many years seen to be his great, his supreme calling. He was diligently sowing the seed from which the Churches have ever since gathered the most fruitful harvests. He strove faithfully to serve his God, while he served his race; and all unconsciously wove for himself a chaplet of unfading honour.

¹ The bulk of it is incorporated in the *Methodist Hymn Book*, recently issued by the Methodist Publishing House.

WESLEY'S ITINERARY

The names of the towns through which he passed on his

Day.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.
1	London	Lewisham	Bath or Bristol	Chester <i>Warrington</i>	Patel'y B'dge Ripon	<i>Aycliff</i> Darlington
2	"	"	"	Chester	<i>Swaledale</i> B'rnard C'tle	<i>Northaller-</i> Thirsk [ton
3	"	"	"	Manchester	<i>Cotherstone</i> Newbiggin	Staveley
4	"	London	"	"	{ <i>Ninthead</i>	Boro'-bridge
5	"	"	"	Bolton <i>Bury</i>	{ Penrith	York
6	"	"	"	{ <i>Rochdale</i> <i>Delph</i> [field	Whitehaven	"
7	"	"	"	{ Hudders-	"	<i>Pocklington</i> Swinefleet
8	"	"	"	{ <i>Mirfield</i> DawGreen n	"	Thorne <i>Crowle</i>
9	"	"	"	Birstal <i>Whitelee</i>	Cockerm'th	Epworth
10	"	"	"	Morley	Carlisle	Owston <i>Kirton</i>
11	"	"	"	{ <i>Cross-hall</i> Wakefield	Newcastle	Gainsboro'
12	"	"	"	<i>Rothwell</i> Leeds	Sunderland	Newark
13	"	"	Stroud	Hunslet	"	Lincoln
14	"	"	Tewkesbury	Woodhouse	Garth Heads	Horncastle
15	"	"	Worcester	Leeds	Berwick	Raithby
16	"	"	Bewdley	"		Boston
17	"	Dorking	Bengeworth	Bramley	Dunbar	"
18	"	London	Pebworth	Bradford	Edinburgh	Marshland
19	"	"	Birmingham	"	"	Louth
20	"	"	Wednesbury	Otley	"	<i>Tealby</i>
21	"	"	Congleton	"	"	Grimsby
22	"	"	Macclesfield	"	"	Epworth
23	Lewisham	"	"	"	"	Crowle
24	"	"	<i>Stockport</i> Manchester	Bingley	Dunbar	"
25	"	"	<i>Oldham</i> Manchester	'other places'	"	Belton [side
26	"	"	Bolton	H'pt'nst'l	Berwick	Westwood-
27	"	"	Warrington	Todmorden	Alnwick	Finningley
28	"	"	Liverpool	Blackburn	<i>Placey</i> Newcastle	<i>Doncaster</i> Rotherham
29	"	Newbury	"	"	<i>The Fell</i> <i>Sheephill</i> Garth Heads	Sheffield <i>Worksop</i>
30	"	Bath	"	Colne	Newcastle	Sheffield
31	"	"	<i>Northwich</i> Alpraham Nantwich	"	" Durham	"

FOR 1780

way, and at which he preached, are in *italics*.

July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Day.
Rotherham	Bristol	Bristol	Bristol <i>Devizes</i>	London	London	1
Sheffield	"	"	Salisbury	"	"	2
Derby	"	Bath	Wilton	"	"	3
<i>Stapleford</i>	"	"	Whitchurch	"	Visits	4
Nottingham	"	"	"	"	the	5
Leicester	"	"	"	"	Societies	6
Northamp- ton	"	Paulton	Portsmouth	"	in	7
London	"	Chew-Magna Stoke	London	"	East Kent	8
"	"	"	"	"	"	9
"	"	"	"	"	"	10
"	"	Bath	"	"	"	11
"	"	Trowbridge	"	"	"	12
"	<i>South Brent</i>	"	"	"	"	13
"	Taunton	Clutton	"	"	"	14
"	Collumpton	Bristol	"	"	"	15
"	Exeter	"	Tunbridge Wells	"	"	16
Reading	Plymouth	"	Sevenoaks	"	"	17
Rainsb'y P ^k	"	"	London	"	"	18
Bath	Plymouth Dock	"	"	"	"	19
"	"	Pill	"	Chatham	"	20
"	St. Austell	Bristol	"	Sheerness	"	21
"	Helstone	"	"	London	"	22
"	Penzance	"	"	"	"	23
Bristol	St. Just	"	Visited the	"	"	24
"	St. Ives	"	Societies	"	"	25
"	Redruth	"	in	"	"	26
Bath	Gwennap	"	Northants	Bedford	"	27
"	<i>Wadebridge</i>	"	London (?)	St. Neot's	"	28
"	Port Isaac	"	"	<i>Godmanch'r</i>	"	29
"	<i>Camelford</i>	"	"	Huntingdon	"	30
"	Launceston	"	Wycombe	Luton	"	31
"	Wells	"	Oxford	"	"	
"	Bristol	"	"	"	"	
"	"	"	"	"	"	

CHAPTER XI
A FIFTH DECADE
OF EVANGELISTIC WORK

1781-1790

WE now enter upon the fifth, the last, decade of Wesley's remarkable Evangelistic career. It comprises the period from the seventy-seventh to the eighty-seventh year of his life. Surprising as it may seem, there is no diminution traceable, either of his travelling or of his preaching, until the last two years of the period.

Many important events occurred during this decade, that had relation rather to the consolidation of Methodism than to Wesley's personal history; and these must be briefly referred to.

The Conference of 1781 was distinguished by a very remarkable service held in the parish church of Leeds. Wesley preached. There were eighteen clergymen present; and at the Sacrament about eleven hundred communicants. Seventy preachers attended the Conference. Wesley desired Fletcher, Dr. Coke, and four others to meet him every evening, that they might consult together on any difficulty that occurred. This was rendered necessary by the renewed conflict of opinion on the Church question,



after painting by Romney

Your Affectionate Brother
Hester

which continued to be acute to the end of Wesley's days, and, indeed, for some years after. One of the Societies, which represented many others, wrote to Wesley, saying that they had, according to his advice, attended the Church services, but the clergyman preached what they believed to be erroneous doctrines. The decision of the Conference was, that those who had been 'bred in the Church' should attend the services there as often as possible; but that if the minister began either to preach the absolute decrees or to rail at and ridicule Christian perfection, they should go quietly out of the Church, yet attend it again on the next opportunity.

The following year, Wesley, with Coke's assistance, instituted a 'Society for the Distribution of Religious Tracts among the Poor.'¹

Very serious trouble arose at Birstal in 1782 respecting the authority by which the appointment of the preachers to the chapel there should be determined; the question being, whether the decision should rest with the Conference or with the Trustees. The same trouble arose also in other places—notably at Dewsbury—where the chapels were not settled on the terms of the Model Deed of 1763. This occasioned much strife, and occupied Wesley's time and attention, which could have been better employed; and so, in some degree, arrested the good work he had in hand. The difficulty was not overcome for several years.

A depression in the state of Kingswood School

¹ Thirty tracts were printed, varying in cost from eightpence each to one shilling per hundred. The 'plan' of the Society and the first catalogue were appended to the *Arminian Magazine* for 1784.

occurred in 1783, but energetic measures effected a change, and he was subsequently able to write :

‘Friday, September 11, 1789.—I went over to Kingswood. Sweet recess! where everything is now just as I wish. But

“Man was not born in shades to lie.”

‘Let us work now ; we shall rest by-and-by.

‘Saturday, 12.—I spent some time with the children, all of whom behaved well ; several are much awakened, and a few rejoicing in the favour of God.’

Another matter of the gravest importance was the preparation in 1784 of what was called A DEED OF DECLARATION. In 1763 was drawn up the form of Deed, just referred to, for the settlement of the chapels, which, amongst other items, provided ‘that the Trustees should permit such persons as shall be appointed at the yearly Conference . . . and no others, to have and enjoy the said premises,’ etc. But the Conference consisted of Wesley, and *such other persons as he chose to invite to confer with him*. It was pointed out to him that, in anticipation of his death, it was necessary more strictly to define the word ‘Conference,’ determining its individual constituents, and providing for its continuity. This was accomplished by a ‘DEED OF DECLARATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS.’ This Deed was enrolled in the Court of Chancery, March 9, 1784, and gave to the Conference a legal definition which hitherto it had lacked. Wesley was in some difficulty in determining the number of preachers who should constitute the Conference. He finally decided upon

one hundred. Some of those who were not chosen, taking offence at their exclusion, created great unpleasantness at the ensuing Conference. The contention was so sharp that Mr. Fletcher besought the contending parties, literally on his knees, to stay the contest and be reconciled. Fears were entertained by many of the preachers that the 'Hundred,' without whose vote no transaction of the Conference was legal, would take advantage of their position to the detriment of the rest. Wesley in anticipation of this wrote a letter, in which he exhorted the 'Hundred' not to take advantage of their position by assuming any superiority over their brethren. This letter he consigned to the care of Joseph Bradford, to be read at the assembling of the first Conference after Wesley's death. The letter was so read, and the Conference unanimously resolved, 'That all the preachers, who are in full connexion with them, shall enjoy every privilege that the members of the Conference enjoy, agreeably to the above written letter.' To this hour that promise has been honourably observed. All duly qualified preachers vote on every subject, the 'legal hundred' always affirming their vote.

Another matter of the most serious interest, which involved Wesley in much controversy, related to the American Societies. Methodism had rapidly grown in what were now the United States of America. Stevens, the eloquent American historian of Methodism, says, 'The Revolution had dissolved not only the civil but also the ecclesiastical relations of the colonies to England. Many of the English clergy, on whom the Methodist Societies had depended for the

Sacraments, had fled from the land, or had entered political or military life, and the Episcopal Church had been generally disabled. In Virginia, the centre of its colonial strength, it had rapidly declined, morally as well as numerically. At the conclusion of the contest many of her churches were in ruins, nearly a fourth of her parishes extinct or forsaken, and thirty-four of the remaining seventy-two were without pastoral supplies; twenty-eight only of her ninety-one clergymen remained, and these, with an addition, soon after the war, of eight from other parts of the country, ministered in but thirty-six parishes. Under these circumstances the Methodists demanded of their preachers the administration of the Sacraments. Many of the societies had been months, some of them years, without them. The demand was not only urgent, it was logically right. . . . What could Wesley do under these circumstances? What but exercise the right of Ordination, which he had for years theoretically claimed, but practically and prudently declined? . . . If there was any imprudence on the part of Wesley in this emergency, it was certainly in his long-continued patience. When he yielded, it was only after the acknowledged independence of the American colonies, and not then till urged to it by his most revered counsellors. Fletcher of Madeley was one of them.¹

Wesley explains his own action in the matter. He writes :

‘Lord King’s account of the primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that Bishops and Presbyters are the

¹ *History of Methodism*, bk. v. ch. vi.

same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused ; not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belonged.

' But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops, who have a legal jurisdiction ; in America there are none, neither any parish minister ; so that, for some hundreds of miles together, there is none either to baptize, or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end, and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's rights, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

' I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint Superintendents¹ over our brethren in North America ; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper. And I have prepared a liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England (I think the best constituted national Church in the world), which I advise all the travelling preachers to use on the Lord's Day, in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all

¹ It will be observed that Wesley appointed Coke and Asbury to be *Superintendents* ; but they soon adopted the title *Bishop*. On hearing of this he wrote to Asbury : ' How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called Bishop ? I shudder, I start at the very thought ! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content ; but they shall never, by my consent, call me Bishop ! '—Letter in *Works*, xiii. 58. It may be said in defence of Coke and Asbury that they were ordained to perform episcopal acts, and that the American Societies had been known as an American Episcopal Church for nearly four years. Wesley's objection to the name may have arisen from a fear of offending the prejudices of friends in England.

other days. I also advise the Elders to administer the Supper of the Lord, on every Lord's Day.

'If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding these poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present, I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.'¹

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that this proceeding had no countenance from Charles Wesley.

In this year (1784) a 'Society for the Establishment of Missions among the Heathen' was founded by Dr. Coke.²

The question of separation from the Church was debated again and again in the Conference; but Wesley, to the end of his days, held himself and his preachers in as close a connection with it as he could. As late as April 4, 1790, he wrote, 'I advise all our brethren that have been brought up in the Church to continue there, and there I leave the matter. The Methodists are to spread life among all denominations; which they will do, till they form a separate sect.'

The record of Wesley's personal history, his travels and public services (contained in his *Journal* and in his letters), is as full and as interesting as at any period of his life, and reveals his surprising energy, and his undiminished devotion to the great work of his life. But death, whose ruthless hand breaks up all earthly relations, was busy amongst the ranks of his friends. The following entry occurs: 'Friday, October 11, 1781.—I came to London, and was informed that my wife died on Monday. This

¹ *Methodist Magazine*, 1785, p. 602.

² Tyerman gives a copy of the proposals for the establishment of this Society, and a first list of subscribers: iii. 480-482.

evening she was buried, though I was not informed of it till a day or two after.'

The Rev. Vincent Perronet, M.A., Vicar of Shoreham, died on May 9, 1785. He was the attached friend of the Wesleys for more than forty years. He sympathized very heartily with all their aims, helped them with his counsels, and wrote in their defence. Charles Wesley called him the Archbishop of Methodism. He continued in his parochial work, but made his house the home of all the Methodist preachers who visited Shoreham, and two of his sons joined their ranks. He was a peaceful, happy, devoted Christian minister, living in close communion with God. Wesley was away in Ireland when he heard of and recorded the death of his friend, adding, 'I follow hard upon him in years, being now in the eighty-second year of my age. O that I may follow him in holiness; and that my last end may be like his!'

But a severer blow was struck to the heart of the evangelist when, within little more than three months after the death of Mr. Perronet, his bosom friend Fletcher also passed away. Fletcher stands at the head of all the leaders of the Methodist revival for the serene saintliness of his character. But not this alone distinguished him. Sanctity was the spirit that pervaded all his powers and all his work. His fitness for great service in the religious upheaving then in progress is thus summed up by Wesley, than whom no one was better qualified to form a correct judgment of him: 'I can never believe it was the will of God that such a burning and shining light should be hid under a bushel. No; instead of being confined to a

country village, it ought to have shone in every corner of our land. He was full as much called to sound an alarm through all the nation as Mr. Whitefield himself. Nay, abundantly more so, seeing he was far better qualified for that important work. He had a more striking person, equal good breeding, an equally winning address; together with a richer flow of fancy, a stronger understanding, a far greater treasure of learning, both in languages, philosophy, philology, and divinity; and, above all (which I can speak with fuller assurance, because I had a thorough knowledge of both one and the other), a more deep and constant communion with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ.¹

He also bears this testimony to the character of his friend: 'I was intimately acquainted with him for thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles. And in all that time, I never heard him speak an improper word, or saw him do an improper action. To conclude. Within fourscore years, I have known many excellent men, holy in heart and life. But one equal to him I have not known; one so uniformly and deeply devoted to God. So unblameable a man in every respect, I have not found either in Europe or America. Nor do I expect to find another such on this side eternity.'²

But a yet more painful stroke awaited him. For some years his brother had been in failing health. After he had ceased from travelling, and, as his brother thought, probably as the result of it, he

¹ Wesley's *Life of Fletcher*, p. 66.

² *Ibid.*, p. 225.

suffered gradually more and more from weakness and gout (a family complaint), inducing nervous sensibility. At length his strength utterly failed. 'For some months,' his daughter wrote, 'he seemed totally detached from earth. He spoke very little, nor wished to hear anything read but the Scriptures.' A few days before his death he called his wife to his bedside, and bade her write, while he dictated, the following lines :

'In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a helpless worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart ;
O could I catch a smile from Thee,
And drop into eternity !'

On March 29, 1788, when he was in his eightieth year, the end came, which 'was, what he particularly wished it might be, peace.' Wesley was away, preaching in Shropshire, and at the time of his brother's death was, with his congregation, singing Charles's own pathetic words :

'Come, let us join our friends above
That have obtained the prize,
And on the eagle wings of love
To joys celestial rise :
Let all the saints terrestrial sing,
With those to glory gone ;
For all the servants of our King,
In earth and heaven, are one.

'One family we dwell in Him,
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death :

One army of the living God,
To His command we bow ;
Part of His host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.'

Through the misdirection of a letter, Wesley was not made acquainted with the sad news until the day before the funeral, when he was in Macclesfield, and therefore quite unable to be present.

The interment was, by Charles's own direction, in the churchyard of St. Marylebone, the parish in which he resided ; and on the tombstone are the appropriate words from his own pen, written on the death of one of his friends :

'With poverty of spirit blest,
Rest, happy saint, in Jesus rest ;
A sinner saved, through grace forgiven,
Redeemed from earth to reign in heaven !
Thy labours of unwearied love,
By thee forgot, are crowned above ;
Crowned, through the mercy of thy Lord,
With a free, full, immense reward !'

The names of John and Charles Wesley must always be linked together in the history of the great revival. They were one in their aim, and in their consecration to it ; and they were to the end one in strong fraternal devotion. The difference in their views on ecclesiastical questions, which for a time interfered with their united action, did not weaken their mutual affection.

The help rendered by Charles to the great upheaving is incalculable. And as the spiritual influence of the revival extended far beyond the bounds of Methodism, so the sweet sounds of Charles Wesley's

incomparable hymns, in which all the great truths of the revival are enshrined, have to this day been wafted on every breeze over the vast fields of Christendom, cheering, exalting, stimulating the Christian life wherever their cadences vibrate. And yet Wesley's estimate of his brother's powers sets down his poetry as 'his least gift.'

His was a loving, impulsive spirit, of great tenderness, capable of ecstatic exaltation, but not without a liability to equal depression. To a warm heart, that made for him many friends, was added a somewhat sensitive temper, which made him some enemies; for he had not the self-control of his brother, or his knowledge of men, or his power to deal with them.

No festival of the Church was so much endeared to Wesley as was All Saints' Day. It was his habitual delight to contemplate the true communion of saints on earth and in heaven. He was also wont so much to rejoice over the departed, in the words of his brother's jubilant funeral hymns, that the death of one and another seemed to leave but little, if any, shadow on his spirit.

That the two deaths just referred to were a severe trial to Wesley, now so truly alone, cannot be doubted. He preached a funeral sermon in memory of his friend, and afterwards published a brief but tender *Life*. He also applied himself to the collection of material for a memoir of his brother. But before this could be completed his own hand had forgotten its cunning.

The incidents in Wesley's personal history during this decade are many of them of a very striking

character. He wrote, in 1783, 'I preached at St. Thomas's Church in the afternoon, and at St. Swithin's in the evening. The tide is now turned ; so that I have more invitations to preach in churches than I can accept of.' It is observable how tenaciously he held to his adopted methods. They seem to be invested in his view with an almost sacred character. The early morning preaching, begun when he was in Georgia, where it was suitable to the climate to be early astir, he introduced into England in 1738, when he began his work. To him the early service was a pleasure ; but, though at first his preachers in their early zeal maintained the practice, yet at length it became irksome both to them and to the people. Finding these services were falling off, he says, 'If this be the case while I am alive, what must it be when I am gone? Give up this, and Methodism too will degenerate into a mere sect, only distinguished by some opinions and modes of worship.'¹ Similar remarks occur elsewhere in his later *Journals*. Is there not here a lack of discernment between what is essential and what is merely accidental? This is not the only particular in which the same thing appears.

Nothing in the years of this decade is more surprising than the exertion which he continued to put forth in the pursuit of his great work. He preached almost as frequently as at any period of his life. His persistent devotion is seen in his pacing the streets of London for five days in 1785, often ankle-deep in sludge and melting snow, to beg £200 to buy clothing for the poor ! In March of this year

¹ *Journal*, March 15, 1784.

he started off to Ireland, preaching all the way to Liverpool, frequently in the open air, notwithstanding frost and snow. Having spent a week in Dublin, he set out for the provinces. Two months were occupied in this employment. His labours were almost incredible. He preached twice or thrice a day, not only in Methodist meeting-houses, but in churches, in Presbyterian chapels, in factories, in bowling-greens, in assembly-rooms, in court-houses, in barns, in 'sloping meadows,' in churchyards, and streets—anywhere wherever he had a chance.¹

Early in the next year we find him varying his public addresses by a sermon to five hundred children, none of his words being of more than two syllables in length. He occupied a month in a visit to Holland, with two of his preachers, not, however, as a mere pleasure trip. Taking boat at the Hague, he found he could write as well in the boat as in his study; and continued to write whenever he was on board. One day he spent 'very quietly in writing, and visiting a few friends,' and in the evening spoke to a little company in his lodgings. On another he found abundant occupation, partly in conversation, in Latin, with the clergy, partly in preaching, his sermons being translated for him; but chiefly in writing—probably his *Life of Fletcher*, the preface of which is dated at Amsterdam. On his return, he applied himself in earnest to this tribute of esteem and affection, even in the midst of his journeys; and when in London he dedicated to it all the time he could spare till November, 'from five in the morning till eight at night. These are my studying hours,'

¹ Tyerman.

says he, 'I cannot write longer in a day without hurting my eyes.'

At this time he affirms that his health was better these last ten years than it had been for ten years together, since he was born. Some of his labours were astonishing for a man of his age. The year 1787 was begun with the accustomed service at four o'clock in the morning, an unusually large congregation having assembled; and he preached again twice afterwards. Again, on one day, after preaching at West Street, and at the new chapel in City Road, he took the mail coach and travelled down to Exeter by tea the next evening. On another journey, after preaching twice at Manchester, and assisting at the administration of the Lord's Supper to nearly thirteen hundred persons, he started at midnight, and, after nineteen hours' travelling, reached Birmingham at seven o'clock, went directly to the chapel, and preached, thankful that he had 'no more weariness than if he had rested all the day.' He left the next morning before five o'clock, travelled nearly eleven hours, and preached at Gloucester; the next morning he left at two, travelling until half-past four in the afternoon, and preached in the evening at Salisbury. The following morning he was on his way to Southampton, where he preached twice, and then embarked for the Channel Islands.

On his birthday in 1788, he wrote: 'I this day enter on my eighty-fifth year: And what cause have I to praise God, as for a thousand spiritual blessings, so for bodily blessings also. How little have I suffered yet, by "the rush of numerous years!" It is true I am not so agile as I was in times past. I

do not run or walk so fast as I did ; my sight is a little decayed ; my left eye is grown dim, and hardly serves me to read.' He had a little pain in the right eye and temple, occasioned by a blow received some months before. He had some decay of memory, but none in hearing, smell, taste, or appetite ; nor did he feel weary either in travelling or in preaching ; nor was he conscious of any decay in writing sermons. All this he imputed to the power of God, fitting him for the work to which he was called ; subordinately, to the prayers of his 'children,' and to the natural means already spoken of. Then he joyfully sings :

' My remnant of days
I spend to His praise
Who died the whole world to redeem :
Be they many or few,
My days are His due,
And they all are devoted to Him.'

But these labours were drawing towards a close. In 1789, however, he visited Ireland once more. Here he suffered from an attack of diabetes. Yet he was incessant in his labours, which were still very great, notwithstanding his diminishing strength.

On Easter Day he writes, 'We had a solemn assembly indeed ; many hundred communicants in the morning ; and in the afternoon far more hearers than our room would contain ; though it is now considerably enlarged. Afterwards I met the Society, and explained to them at large the original design of the Methodists, viz. not to be a distinct party, but to stir up all parties, Christians or heathens, to worship God in spirit and in truth ; but the Church of England in particular, to which they belonged

from the beginning. With this view I have uniformly gone on for fifty years, never varying from the doctrine of the Church at all; nor from her discipline, of choice, but of necessity. So, in a course of years, necessity was laid upon me (as I have proved elsewhere), (1) to preach in the open air; (2) to pray extempore; (3) to form societies; (4) to accept of the assistance of lay preachers; and, in a few other instances, to use such means as occurred to prevent or remove evils that we either felt or feared.¹

His health now compelled him at times to be a hearer, when he would fain have preached; but still he preached frequently, and sometimes under trying circumstances. One day he set out at five, reached Castlebar between three and four, and in the evening preached at Killchrist to so large a congregation that he was obliged to do so out of doors, though it rained all the time.

At Dublin he visited all the classes, though there were above a thousand members. On his birthday he writes: 'This day I enter on my eighty-sixth year. I now find I grow old: 1. My sight is decayed; so that I cannot read a small print, unless in a strong light. 2. My strength is decayed; so that I walk much slower than I did some years since. 3. My memory of names, whether of persons or places, is decayed; till I stop a little to recollect them.' He met the Irish preachers once more in conference, delighted to find such a body of men, 'of so sound experience, so deep piety, and so strong understanding;' held a day of fasting and prayer, chiefly for the increase of the work of God, and

¹ *Journal*, April 12, 1789.

followed the whole with a watch-night. His parting from his Irish people was very impressive. Before he went on board he read a hymn, and the crowd, as far as emotion would allow them, joined the saintly patriarch in singing. Falling on his knees, he asked God to bless them, their families, the Church, and Ireland. They shook the tremulous hand; many wept profusely, and fell upon his neck and kissed him. He stepped on deck, lifted his hands in prayer, and passed out of the view of a people whom he dearly loved. The sea being smooth, he shut himself up in his chaise, which was on board, and read. In the evening a hymn was sung on deck, and he preached. Again and again his efforts during the remaining months of the year were greater than can well be imagined.

The year 1790 opens with the confession, 'I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning. . . . However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour: I can preach and write still.' And so he did, to the end of the year, as the Itinerary for the year will show. But his work was the work of one whose bodily frame was in great feebleness, though his spirit soared aloft in holy purpose; and again and again, in spite of his physical decay, his doings were really astonishing. But lack of space forbids detailed accounts, though they are full of interest. One incident must be related. In the midst of his still-continued evangelistic efforts, he wrote, 'I went over to that poor skeleton of ancient Winchelsea. It is beautifully situated on the top of a steep hill, and was regularly built in broad streets,

crossing each other, and encompassing a very large square; in the midst of which was a large church now in ruins. I stood under a large tree, on the side of it, and called to most of the inhabitants of the town, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel." It seemed as if all that heard were, for the present, almost persuaded to be Christians.¹

The primary aim of these pages, an aim steadily kept in view throughout, has been to give the utmost possible prominence to Wesley's evangelistic labours, as constituting the supreme work of his life; and special emphasis has been laid upon his open-air services, as the one means by which he came directly into contact with the bulk of the English population, whom he could not possibly have reached in any other way: the churches they did not, and would not, enter. Wesley preached his first open-air sermon in Bristol on Monday, April 2, 1739. The one at Winchelsea, referred to above, was the last. A period of more than fifty years intervenes, and it was within that period that he ceased not to make his voice heard in clear, earnest, tender, and effectual appeals to the conscience and conviction of the nation. These two events mark the beginning and the end of that great work. An eye-witness of the latter incident says, 'The word was attended with power, and the tears of the people flowed in torrents.' The scene was very impressive. This venerable man, eighty-seven years of age, worn, but not weary, his snow-white locks falling upon his shoulders, his tremulous hand holding up for the last time his little

¹ *Journal*, October 7, 1790.

pocket Bible¹—his constant companion—his eyes well-nigh closed, his face upturned, his placid, peaceful countenance revealing the calm, unruffled mind within. Well might the people weep. For fifty years, without let or hindrance, this faithful apostle of righteousness had raised his voice ‘abroad,’ clear in its truth as in its tones, preaching faithfully, almost ceaselessly, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, in all parts of the kingdom, probably to more people than any teacher of that gospel had ever addressed before. On that October day, beneath that spreading ash tree, under the shadow of Old Winchelsea Church, Wesley’s happy, holy, useful work of open-air preaching ceased. He then pursued his way and his work together, both ending in London. But an abrupt termination to his *Journals* closes the revelations of that interesting document. A fifth decade is completed.

Little has been said respecting Wesley’s work for the press during the last two decades. Although it was less in amount than he had previously written, it was considerable, especially in view of his other work. In addition to what has been already mentioned, he issued more than one hundred and fifty separate publications, including several volumes of an edition of his *Collected Works*; a *Compendium of Natural Philosophy* in five volumes; an *Ecclesiastical History* in four volumes; *A History of England*, in four volumes also; and a revision of his own translation of the text in his *Notes on the New Testament*. In each volume of the *Arminian Magazine*, also, were many articles from his pen.

¹ This little ‘Field’ Bible is one of the modest insignia of office held by the President of the Methodist Conference.

WESLEY'S ITINERARY

The names of the towns through which he passed on his

Day.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.
1	London	London	Newbury	Stockport Oldham		¹ Dumfries
2	"	"	Bath	Manchester		Carlisle
3	"	"	"	"		Hexham
4	"	"	Bristol	" <i>Altrincham</i>		Newcastle
5	Leytonstone	"	"	Chester		" [Fell
6	Stratford	"	{ <i>Kingswood</i> Bristol	<i>Warrington</i> Liverpool		{ <i>Gateshead</i> Newcastle
7	London	"	"	"		"
8	"	"	"	"		"
9	"	<i>Brentford</i>	"	Wigan <i>Northwich</i>		<i>Wolsingham</i>
10	"	¹ Lambeth	"	Bolton		Weardale <i>Stanhope</i>
11	"	London	"	(a hiatus in Journal to May 24)	¹ Alnwick	Durham
12	Highbury	"	Kingswood			Sunderland <i>Monkwear-</i>
13	"	"	Bristol			Pens [<i>mouth</i>
14	"	"	"	¹ Manchester		Hartlepool
15	"	"	Stroud <i>Painswick</i>	¹ Walton		Stockton
16	"	Balham	Gloucester <i>Tewkesbury</i>	¹ Bolton		Yarm <i>Potto</i> [by
17	London	"	Worcester			Hutton Rud- <i>Stokesley</i>
18	"	Wandsw'rth	Stourport <i>Quinton</i>	[¹ Supplied from letters.]		Whitby
19	"	Chelsea	Birmingham			"
20	"	"	"			"
21	"	London	"			<i>Malton</i>
22	"	"	Wednesbury <i>Dudley</i> [ton Wolv'r'h'mp-			Pickering Scarborough
23	"	"	Madeley			"
24	"	Wapping			¹ Fortglen returns to Aberdeen	Bridlington <i>Beverley</i>
25	Dorking	"	"		<i>Laurence-</i> <i>Brechin</i> [<i>k'rk</i>	Hull
26	"	Rotherhithe	Shrewsbury		Aucht'rard'r	"
27	"	London	Newcastle <i>Lane End</i>		Glasgow	"
28	"	Brentford	Burslem <i>Tunstal</i>			<i>Epworth</i>
29	London		Congleton	¹ Otley		Owston
30	"		Macclesfield		<i>Moffat</i>	"
31	"		"		Dumfries	

FOR 1790

way, and at which he preached, are in italics.

July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Day.
Lincoln		Bristol	Portsmouth		¹ London	1
<i>Newton</i>			<i>Cobham</i>			2
Gainsbor'gh		"	London			3
Epworth		"	"			4
<i>Misterton</i>	¹ Bristol	Bath	"	¹ High Wycombe		5
Epworth						6
Donc'st'r (T.)		"	Rye			7
Rotherham		"	"			8
(T.)		Bristol	<i>Winchelsea</i>		¹ London	9
' There can		"	Rye	¹ London		10
be no ques-		"	Sevenoaks	¹ "		11
tion that		"	London			12
Sheffield also		Chew-Stoke	"			13
would be						14
visited; and		Bristol	Colchester	During the		15
most likely			"	remainder		16
Derby and				of the year		17
Nottingham;	¹ Haverford		Norwich	Wesley	¹ "	18
also, per-	West		Yarmouth	would		19
haps, Castle		"	Lowestoft	doubtless	¹ "	20
Donnington,			<i>Loddon</i>	take his		21
Leicester,	¹ Pembroke	<i>Thornbury</i>	Norwich	" little jour-		22
Coventry,		Kingswood	"	neys" into		23
and other			<i>Swaffham</i>	Bedford-		24
places, (T.)		¹ Bristol	Lynn	shire, Hert-		25
				fordshire,		26
		¹ "		Kent, etc.		27
		"	<i>Diss</i>			28
		"	Bury		¹ "	29
		"	"			30
¹ Bristol		"	London		December	31
		"	"		would be	
		"	"		spent mainly	
		"	"		if not ex-	
		"	"		clusively in	
		"	"		London	
		"	"	¹ London		
		<i>Devizes</i>	"			
	Bristol	Sarum	¹ Hinxworth			
	"	"	¹ Bedford			
	"	<i>Winton</i>	¹ nr. London			
	<i>Castle Cary</i>	Portsmouth				
	Ditchat [<i>let</i>	Newport,	¹ London			
	<i>Shepton Mal-</i>	I. of Wight				
¹ Bristol	Pensford					

PART III
THE LAST YEAR

CHAPTER XII

THE CLOSING SCENES

WESLEY'S work was nearly at an end when the first light of the year 1791 broke upon him. We have no record of the watch-night service, in which, as usual, the mercies of the year were acknowledged, with praise and thanksgiving ; its shortcomings and sins confessed, and the new year anticipated with fervent prayer ; or of the Covenant and Sacramental services in which, with its leader at its head, the Society sought to prepare itself for the toils and responsibilities of the future.

We learn from various sources that Wesley was very feeble, though he wrote, in January, that his health for four days had been better than for several months ; yet he was compelled to own, 'Time has shaken me by the hand, and death is not far behind.' It was in keeping with his whole previous life for him to say, 'I hope I shall not live to be useless.' So late as February he declared his purpose, 'if God permit, to visit Gloucester, Worcester, and Stourport, in March,' and he actually made arrangements for his usual visit to Bristol, and then to the North, his chaise being sent before him to Bristol for this purpose. One of his last letters was written on

February 19 to Mrs. Knapp, a devoted saint of Worcester, in which he says :

‘ London, February 19, 1791.

‘ MY DEAR SUKY,

‘ As the state of my health is exceedingly wavering, and waxes worse, I cannot yet lay down my plans for my future journeys. Indeed, I propose, if God permit, to set out for Bristol on the 28th instant ; but how much further I shall be able to go, I cannot yet determine. If I am pretty well, I hope to be at Worcester about the 22nd of March. To find you and yours in health of body and mind will be a great pleasure to,

‘ My dear Suky, yours affectionately,

‘ J. WESLEY.’

But all these intentions were frustrated. On Thursday he preached at Lambeth ; and on Friday he read and wrote through the day, preaching at Chelsea in the evening. On the following Sunday he was unable to preach, and much of the day was spent in sleep. On Monday his strength rallied, and, though urged not to do so, he fulfilled an engagement to dine at Twickenham. He was accompanied thither by his niece, Miss Sarah Wesley, and Miss Ritchie, who has preserved a minute record of these last days. On his way he called on Lady Mary Fitzgerald, and ‘ conversed and prayed most sweetly.’ On Tuesday he preached at City Road—his last sermon there. Thus closed his public ministry among his people. All these services were conducted in great weakness. His venerable appearance in the Autumn of the following year is picturesquely described by Henry Crabbe Robinson, in the following words :—‘ It was, I believe, in October, 1790, that I



THE HOUSE AT LEATHERHEAD, SURREY, WHERE JOHN WESLEY PREACHED HIS LAST SERMON.

heard John Wesley in the great round meeting-house of Colchester. He stood in a wide pulpit, and on each side of him stood a minister, and the two held him up, having their hands under his armpits. His feeble voice was barely audible; but his reverend countenance, especially his long white locks, formed a picture never to be forgotten. There was a vast crowd of lovers and admirers. It was for the most part a pantomime, but the pantomime went to the heart. Of the kind, I never saw anything comparable to it in after life.'

On Wednesday, the 23rd, he visited a gentleman at Leatherhead, and preached in his dining-room, on 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.' This was the last of the long series. *He preached no more.* 'On that day fell from his dying grasp a trumpet of the truth which had sounded the everlasting gospel oftener, and more effectually, than that of any other man for sixteen hundred years. . . . It has been admitted that Whitefield preached more eloquently, with few exceptions to larger assemblies, and travelled more extensively (though not more miles) than Wesley, within the same limits of time; but Wesley survived him more than twenty years, and his power has been more productive and permanent. Whitefield preached eighteen thousand sermons, more than ten a week, for his thirty-two years of ministerial life. Wesley preached forty-two thousand, after his return from Georgia; more than fifteen a week. His public life stands out in the history of the world unquestionably pre-eminent in religious labours above that of any other man since the apostolic age.¹

¹ Stevens' *History of Methodism*.

The following day he spent with his friend and executor, Mr. Wolff, at Balham, where he wrote his final letter. It was addressed to the great anti-slavery advocate, William Wilberforce; and is dated :

‘London, February 24, 1791.

‘MY DEAR SIR,

‘Unless the Divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius, *contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise, in opposing the execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but, *if God be for you, who can be against you?* Are all of them together stronger than God? O! “*be not weary in well doing.*” Go on, in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it.

‘Reading this morning a tract, wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance,—that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a *law*, in our colonies, that the *oath* of a black, against a white, goes for nothing. What villainy is this!

‘That He who has guided you, from your youth up, may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of, dear sir,

‘Your affectionate servant,

‘JOHN WESLEY.’

The next day he was brought home to City Road. He went upstairs, and requested that, for half an hour, he should be left alone; after which time his faithful friend, Joseph Bradford, found him so unwell that he sent for his physician, Dr. Whitehead. He

lingered in much weakness for one week, often singing or repeating snatches of his brother's or Dr. Watts's hymns, or passages of the Holy Scriptures, which he had so long and so freely proclaimed; and again and again exclaiming, in the joy of his faith, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' Then, at length, about nine o'clock in the morning of March 2, 1791, in the presence of a few of his dearest friends, representatives of his beloved people, and while they were commending him to God in silent prayer—Joseph Bradford, one of his itinerant helpers, saying, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the heir of glory shall come in'—with a simple 'Farewell' upon his lips, John Wesley, in the eighty-eighth year of his age, passed from the scene of his great evangelistic toils on earth to the joy of his everlasting reward.

The little company rose in tears, sang a hymn, knelt again in prayer, and then in sorrow quitted the solemn and painful scene.

The attempted work is done—imperfectly, it is acknowledged. The abundance of available material, while making it a comparatively easy task to compile a 'Life,' presents a corresponding difficulty in the necessary exclusion of so much interesting matter.

Two objects have been kept steadily in view throughout the progress of the foregoing pages. The first has been to give prominence to the preparation—divine and human—of a distinguished agent of God, obviously raised up to bring about, in a very remarkable way, the spiritual awakening of this

kingdom; possibly, and as many believe, to save it from a descent into a deeper gloom, if not into a dreadful catastrophe.

A second object in view has been to bring into relief the courage, the fidelity, but more particularly the unbroken continuity of effort, which characterized Wesley's evangelistic labours. Many are the quibbling—and, perhaps, some just—detractions made by captious or uninstructed critics, from the dignity and grandeur of Wesley's life and work. But a little light only is needed to enable an unbiassed observer to see in him a fitting agent of a great purpose, and a noble illustration of undistracted devotion to a high calling.

It is not suggested that the work begun by Wesley and his coadjutors—for they must not be separated—was completed by them. The very nature of that work demands that succeeding agencies must carry it forward in following years, even to the end of time. It may be said that the work begun in Wesley's time was not a new work. His was the work of revival. He created nothing. He had no new truth to proclaim, but an old one. In this respect he differed from Luther as a spiritual reformer, inasmuch as Luther condemned the existing faith of the Church, and sought its correction. Wesley, on the other hand, adhered to his Church's teaching, as it was presented in her authoritative writings, her formularies, and her traditions, and he strove to arouse attention to it. There was a marked unity and simplicity in Wesley's doings. He viewed all men in the light of his own experience. He had felt the need of a gospel; he had sought and found

it. He had tried to make himself righteous by rules and performances, and he failed. He had by the same method tried to make others so, with similar results. He baptized children by trine immersion; he administered the Lord's Supper weekly, and 'many such like things' he did; but they did not change the heart; they did not impart a new life. Never could man say with greater truthfulness, 'But I of means have made my boast.' Yet, with all the corrective measures, with all the rigours of a stern self-discipline, which he brought to bear on his own life, he still had felt a great lack, an unsatisfied longing. That lack was supplied in the little sanctuary in Aldersgate. He was thenceforward no longer a theorist. He had proved experimentally the efficacy of this means of renewal. He had tested it by the severest test possible to him—its power to satisfy the deepest demands of his own life. He felt the power of a new life imparted to him in response to faith.

He now worked under entirely new conditions. When he had proved the gospel salvation, he gave up seeking to make men better by rules, and he tried the gospel, and found it to be as effectual in them as in himself. He said, 'The drunkard is become sober, the immoral chaste.' Homes, as well as lives, were changed when the gospel new life came into them. The outward forms now had a new purpose to serve—namely, to cultivate and nourish the life they could not impart. From these positions he never departed. This is the great lesson of Wesley's life.

The problem of the world's regeneration was first wrought out within the sphere of his own experience.

After his own change, when he was able to appreciate his former blindness, sinfulness, and need, he was able also to estimate the needs, the blindness, and the sinfulness of others. To open the eyes of men born blind like himself, to lead them to fountains where he himself had washed, was the work to which his life henceforth was consecrated, as these pages are designed to show. He had a distinct and clear idea of what every man needed. It was not a change of opinion, but a change of life—a new life. In his view, all were spiritually dead until they received the gospel salvation. That salvation he believed was provided for all ; and it was offered to all : every one was capable of receiving it ; and it was the duty of every one to accept it. These were his primary truths. On these he spent his strength to the end ; and the world has seen and rejoiced in the fruit thereof. These same truths the world needs to-day, and will ever need, as each successive generation of men arises on the face of the earth.

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John Wesley, evangelist.

